

## **The Changing Character of Lynching**

# The Changing Character of Lynching

Review of Lynching, 1931-1941

With a Discussion of Recent Developments in This Field

By JESSIE DANIEL AMES

Executive Director

Association of Southern Women  
for the Prevention of Lynching



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"I heard I was lynched but didn't pay any attention to it, 'cause I knew I was livin'."

## DARK JUSTICE

By DANIEL WHITEHEAD HICKEY  
(Atlanta Constitution, February 22, 1942)

*Early they gathered for justice,  
Eager, the countryside's men,  
Running him down; and they scented  
His path, but lost it again.  
The hounds bayed low in the darkness,  
Like fireflies were their eyes  
As they sniffed at the honeysuckle,  
Spurred by the posse's cries.  
Down they went through the gullies,  
Over a brook they leapt,  
No sound but the silence listening  
To rhythms the water wept.  
Two hundred strong they followed,  
Their lanterns bright in the dark  
As they forged ahead and stumbled,  
Led by the bloodhounds' bark.  
They ran him down and caught him,  
A cringing thing, wild-eyed;  
Terror was on his pleading lips;  
Begging for mercy he cried  
Again and again, but they followed,  
Two hundred men, and strong,  
Mowing him down with their rifles.  
Bleeding, they dragged him along  
By the light of their ghostly lanterns  
Over the briar and thorn,  
Swinging him up by a hempen rope,  
Moaning and riddled and torn,  
Pointing their rifles upon him  
Again and again, to make sure,  
Then left him there in the darkness,  
Swinging, alone, with no stir  
In the awful silence that gathered  
But the drip, drip, drip, on the ground  
Of life ebbing fast in the moonlight.  
Slowly they went, with no sound  
But the sudden whirring of motors,  
Their headlights' yellow flare  
Rounding the darkened roadways,  
Dusting the country air.  
Lonely he swung in the silence,  
Riddled; but plainer than death  
The vigil of Venus above him,  
The honeysuckle's breath.*

## *Introduction*

"When orders are finally given to ground arms on all fronts, we are likely to find that millions of men will be demobilized and will return to civilian life to find that it is not easy for them to be reabsorbed. . . . It is very nearly a foregone conclusion that there will be, at that time, a great movement of social unrest." Attributed to Adolf Berle.

It is not the part of wisdom to accept the decreasing number of lynchings as indicative of any degree of permanency. The South has not yet gained sufficient economic stature to supplant the work of the New Deal. The government agencies which have been directed toward improving the economic status of agricultural workers and their sons and daughters are subjected to constant attack by certain powerful newspapers, lobbyists, and the Congress. As the financing of war needs grows more and more oppressive, the demand to cut off support to all non-defense activities gathers more adherents. The appropriation for the CCC has already been eliminated from the House Appropriations Bill; WPA support is reduced; the Farm Security Administration is again under fire. The exigencies of war may call for the labor of those who are on the rolls of these agencies, but with the coming of peace these same people, perhaps more of them, will come back to a jobless, poverty-stricken existence. Unless there is productive work waiting to absorb their energies and to give them hope, the passions and hatreds which have characterized their lives in the past will again be aroused. They will find some outlet sufficiently violent to bring release. Minority peoples who are physically marked as distinct from the majority may well become the target for the expression of frustration of an unemployed and angry majority. The aftermath of the first World War gives evidence of what the backwash from war can bring to the South.

Fundamentally the white South is not yet fixed in any new ideals expressive of a genuine regeneration of mind and spirit. The white South still believes in the inherent right of the white race to rule supreme over Negroes. It still believes that the rights and privileges of democracy can be limited by force; that certain jobs are the exclusive prerogative of white people; that equal pay for equal work, equal protection and administration of the law for all, and the free exercise of the ballot imperil white racial suprem-

acy. The need to hang together in the present days in order to keep from hanging separately later on will hold in abeyance any widespread outbreak of racial violence, but this need, or at least the recognition of it, will pass with the passing of war.

Decrees and edicts by the President protecting the status of Negroes will be honored in the breach unless the white people of the South come to realize that the future of the South and of the Nation depends upon the extending of certain inalienable rights to the Negro race. If the South is saved from a post-war era of violence, bloodshed, lynching, and torture, it will be because sane white Southerners begin now to work for, as well as talk for, the principles of Democracy. But the task is not alone that of the white South. As there are arrogant and unruly white people, so are there arrogant, unruly, and embittered Negroes. The responsibility of Southern Negroes for the kind of South they will live in is as great as is that of the white people, in the same direction and toward the same end.

JESSIE DANIEL AMES.

July, 1942.

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# THE CHANGING CHARACTER OF LYNCHING

## PART I

### THE MOB CHANGES ITS FEATURES

For four years lynchings had been decreasing in number—from the thirty recorded in 1926 to sixteen in 1927; still lower to eleven in 1928; down to ten in 1929. Prosperity had come and lynchings were going. When the first lynching of 1930 at Ovilla, Georgia, was reported on the first day of February, it did not disturb the public's complacency, though the mob was said to have indulged in acts of excessive brutality. By April, few people even remembered the lynching on February 1. That month of April started well, but ended with three more lynchings, all within less than a week. From spring to October, each month the lynching madness raged. So often the mob struck and so barbarous were the tortures inflicted on the victims that men and women were not able to forget them, even in the tragedies of the first year of the great depression. Prosperity had gone, lynchings were back.

Stirred by the unexpected resurgence of this crime, the Board of Directors of the Commission on Interracial Co-operation planned for the investigation of every lynching occurring that year. To direct this investigation it created a special committee, the Southern Commission on the Study of Lynching—the purpose of which was outlined by the chairman George Fort Milton in the introduction to the "Tragedy of Lynching." "The quest for a preventive can be undertaken only after we have an understanding of what it is that is to be prevented. This necessary analysis of the lynching, its background, circumstances, and meaning, introduces many baffling elements. Is lynching a group response to general factors? Is there a sufficient common pattern to crimes committed a thousand miles apart to enable us to isolate definite contributory causes? What parts do poverty, ignorance, racial emotions play in these mob deaths? What is the social pathology, the emotional history of a lynching mob? Could these things be learned, or any moiety of them, a real beginning toward diagnosis would be made and prescription would swiftly follow."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>This was the first scientific study ever made of lynchings, case by case, in the effort to discover the underlying causes and, if possible, to formulate an effective preventive program. It was directed by a group of Southern men composed of George Fort Milton, Editor, *Chattanooga News*, Chairman; Dr. Howard W. Odum, University of North Carolina; Julian Harris, News Editor, *Atlanta Constitution*; Alex W. Spence, attorney-at-law, Dallas, Texas; Dr. W. P. King, Book Editor, Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Nashville; Dr. W. J. McGlothlin, President of Furman University, Greenville, S. C.; Dr. R. R. Moton, President of Tuskegee Institute; Dr. John Hope, President of Atlanta University; Dr. Charles S. Johnson, Fisk University, Nashville, and Dr. B. F. Hubert, President, Georgia State College, Savannah.

However, it was not only the number of lynchings in 1930 that marked that year as one of the worst in the last couple of decades. It was the bestial excesses which characterized the mobs. Long and exciting man hunts with frequent use of bloodhounds preceded the capture of the victims; barbarous tortures of living men were inflicted; mutilation of the bodies was indulged in. Women and children were frequently present, not as onlookers but as active participants. So alike was the pattern throughout 1930 that many thought that lynching could be described as a contagious malady, with newspapers acting as carriers of the germ. Then, as though satiated by its very excesses, the mob spirit subsided.

For two years something of a rest period ensued, in which the combined number of lynchings just equalled that of 1930. But in 1933 the number rose sharply to the highest point since 1926. The hopeful note sounded in the introduction to "The Tragedy of Lynching," which declared that once the causes were known "prescription would quickly follow," was lost in the thunder of facts. Lynchings still continued. When in 1936 lynchings again dropped sharply, it was considered merely an accident to which no importance could be attached. But, as each succeeding year brought fewer and fewer lynchings, hope that lynchings were disappearing was renewed.

## **Lynching Concentrates In the Southeast**

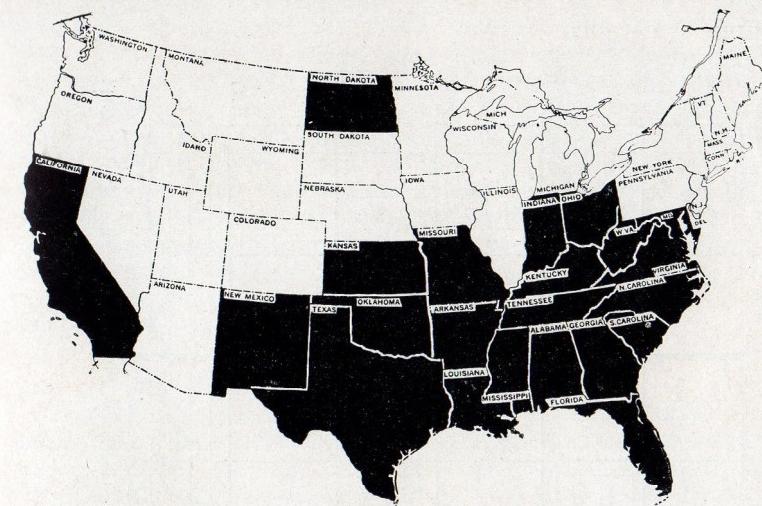
With the passage of five years in which this progression downward continued (Graph I) other changes than the decrease in numbers of lynchings were noticed. The first change was the gradual reduction in the number of states involved. Between 1930 and 1935, twenty-one had had one or more lynchings, but between 1936 and 1941 this was lowered to nine,<sup>1</sup> while in the last part of the decade only six states had lynched. In 1940 Mississippi dropped out of the regular lynching states, leaving only Georgia and Florida as "regulars."<sup>1</sup>

Then those whose minds were continuously concerned about lynchings noticed that there was a change in mobs and in their methods. A review of the record shows that this change became marked in 1936, when mobs began generally to be more orderly and to commit fewer lynchings within the definition set out in Federal antilynching bills. Fewer prisoners were taken from officers or jails; fewer victims of mobs were accused of criminal offenses. In 1938, the last man hunt<sup>2</sup> was reported, as were also the last lynchings in which mobs resorted to torture and the burning of the bodies of their victims.<sup>3</sup>

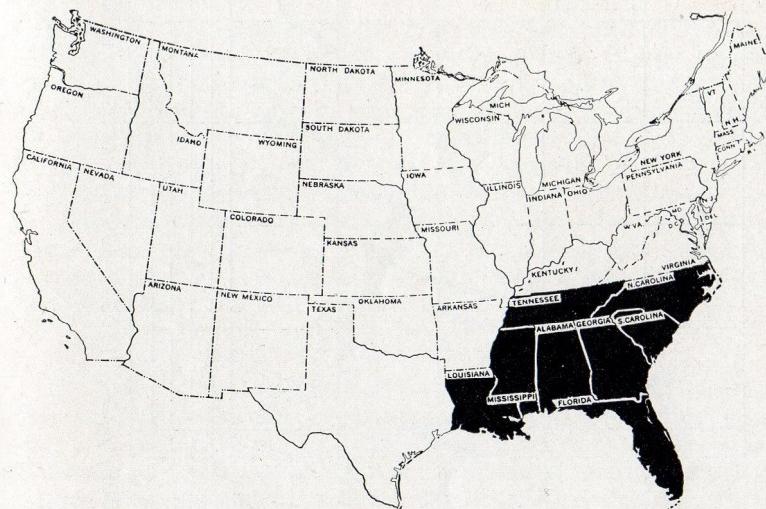
<sup>1</sup>See maps, page 3.

<sup>2</sup>Ruston, Louisiana.

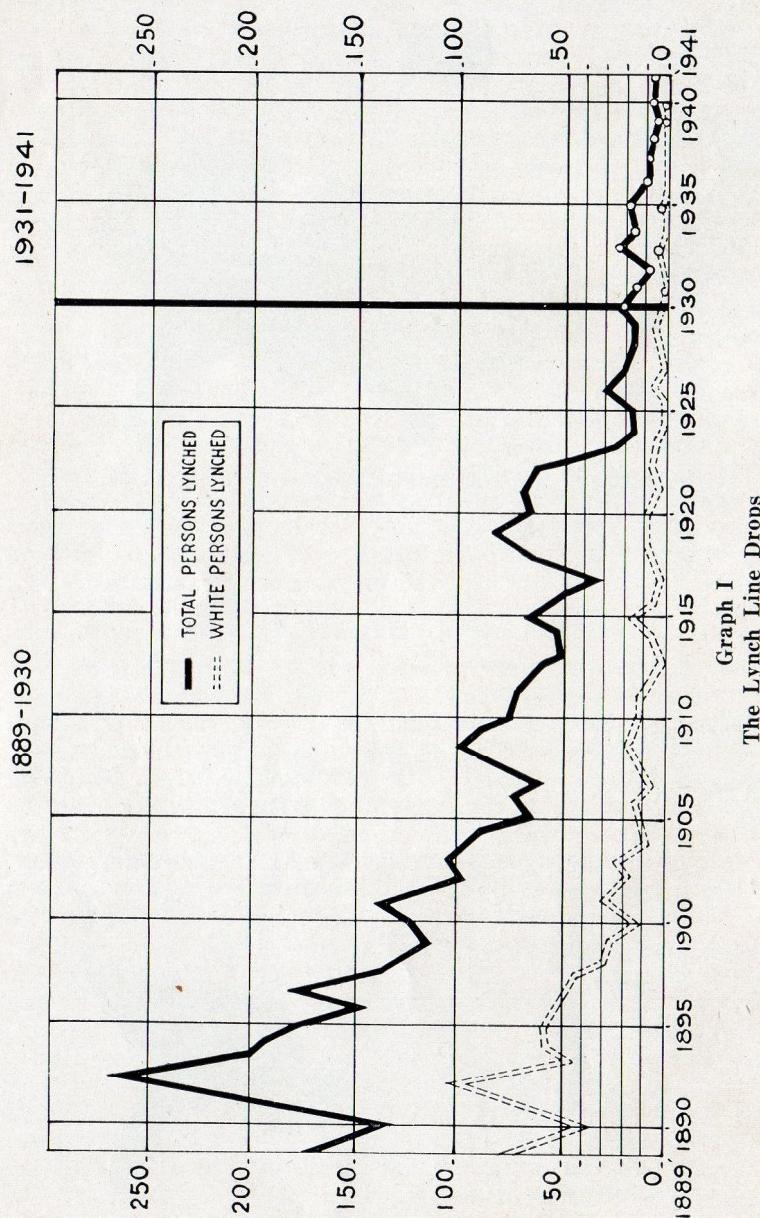
<sup>3</sup>Sikeston, Missouri, 1942, shows that this sadism is not gone.



Lynchings were not confined to the South in 1930-1935



## Only the Deep South Lynched in 1936-1941



Graph I  
The Lynch Line Drops

### Mobs Grow Smaller

With the decline of the man hunt and of sadism went the decline in the size of the mob. Increasingly, reports indicated that a mob of three, four, fewer than fifteen, "several cars," or "of unknown size" had committed a lynching. With the elimination of spectacular acts, lynchings gradually began to lose their news value, certainly their value to the Associated Press, until by 1939 the charge was made that lynchings had "gone underground" and that the white press was deliberately suppressing stories of lynchings. It is more reasonable to conclude that the change in the type of mob violence and in the character and size of mobs had reduced the news value of most lynchings to that of local murders with only local interest.

### Mobs Drop Claims of Chivalry

As mobs changed in their methods, they also changed the claims for their motivation. Less frequently were lynchers saying that protection of white women was involved. So frequently had it been asserted in the past that chivalry inspired lynchings that the nation had come to accept this as the real cause of the majority of lynchings. Newspapers editorially supported this belief; yet, though the percentage of lynchings committed allegedly for the protection of Southern white women has changed little in the past decade, as early as 1936 practically all Southern daily papers had stopped editorially covering lynchers with this cloak of high purpose. Lynchers, themselves, less frequently resorted to this claim.

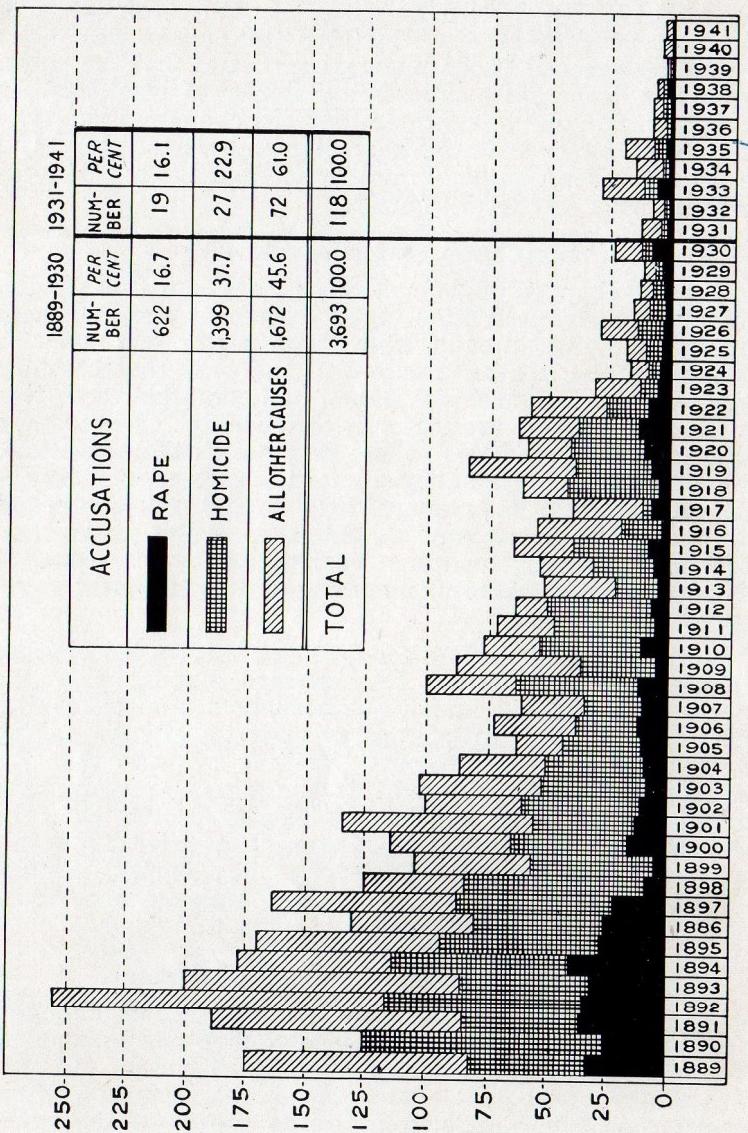
However, the apologists for lynchers substituted another claim equally as effective. They charged that failure of the courts to convict and punish Negroes who committed capital offenses, especially that of rape, necessitated citizens' taking the law into their own hands. Striking evidence that the public never wholly accepted this as a genuine reason is the long list of lynchings which have been prevented when the accusations were homicide or rape. But after 1936 this excuse also disappeared. Whatever it may signify, the fact is that in 1939, 1940, and 1941 there was not one victim of a lynching who was accused of a capital crime.

### Lynchings for Minor Offenses Increase

By 1936 public opinion toward lynching had changed. Neither the protection of Southern women nor leniency of Southern courts was accepted as justification for the acts of lynchers. With this change it became increasingly apparent that minor infractions of the law or of the white man's social code accounted for the majority of lynchings. (Graph II).

With the claim of chivalry and the indictment of the

*Solution  
to problem*



Graph II  
Accusations Against Persons Lynched

courts for negligence dropped as excuses for lynching for capital crimes, the logical result was an increase in the number of lynchings for minor reasons. However, it is worthy of special note that in the last three years, 1939-1941, there have been no lynchings except for minor causes. If this situation remains relatively the same in the future, these three years may mark the beginning of an undirected, unorganized but effective program of systematic suppression of all minority groups. To be prepared for such a development, the South must give more study than in the past to all minor offenses for which Negroes are lynched and to the sections of the South in which they are committed. Already it is known that almost all of them occur in small towns, rural communities, and the open country—areas in which legal control is most difficult to exercise; the power of outside public opinion is weakest; minds and emotions are more generally abnormal. It is here that the most destructive and barbarous interracial conflicts will develop when peace comes.

Adverse public opinion against lynching for any cause must become so widespread as to reach into all Southern communities. That it has penetrated slightly into these isolated and thinly populated districts is evidenced by the changed attitude of local citizens toward giving publicity to a lynching. Formerly, a community not only made no effort to hide the criminal conduct of either the respectable or the hoodlum element of its population, but actually boasted of it if the conduct was held to be necessary to the preservation of the white race or to the maintenance of racial superiority. But communities nowadays that permit a lynching for no reason other than a "service to tradition and race" sees to it that no local correspondent of the nearby metropolitan daily rushes the story out. This small gain, if it be one, may be maintained and increased by continuing to investigate every lynching and every ruthless murder of a Negro by citizens, officers, or posses, and to give the facts to the people of the state and county where the act is committed. For however valid it may be to assume that public opinion elsewhere has effected this change in local attitudes, investigation of some of the lynchings for minor offenses offers no tenable conclusion that it has affected the rigid determination of white citizens to maintain and protect at any cost their absolute social control over the Negro.

\* \* \*

Minor offenses for which the largest number of lynchings was committed in this decade, according to the claims of the lynchers,<sup>1</sup> involved conduct toward Southern white women. As the Association of Southern Women for the

<sup>1</sup>Investigations were made in forty-six lynchings in which the news stories gave indications of suppressed facts. In compiling statistics, however, the accusation made by the lynchers is used, even when investigation has revealed other causes or circumstances that indicated justifiable homicide rather than murder.

Prevention of Lynching had at its initial meeting repudiated lynching as necessary to the protection of white women, it seemed well to investigate these claims, to find out to what extent the stories fitted the facts. These investigations showed that white men, determined to get rid of a certain Negro, would accuse him of an attempted sex crime. They knew that officers would approve without question their action for this offense. Local public opinion, controlled by the state of mind of both white men and women excited by an accusation involving implications of sex, would brook no interference from peace officers or state officials. One such case was that of a Negro lynched because he had "winked" at a white woman. In fact, the Negro was afflicted with a tic on one side of his face. In three cases of lynching for alleged attempted rape, the lynched Negroes were guilty of house breaking. One victim was lynched for alleged rape after a Grand Jury failed to indict him for lack of evidence. In another case, the landlord wanted his Negro tenant's Government checks and cotton crop. While in some instances the weight of evidence supported the charge of attempted rape, investigations of many lynchings indicated so strongly that white women, frequently members of lynchers' families, were merely a front for lynchers that no report of a lynching for the protection of a white woman could be accepted as true until it was verified.

The next commonest cause for lynching grew out of difficulties arising between Negro and white men. Ten Negroes were lynched for fighting; ten others, for "being disrespectful to" or "disputing with" white men; six, against whom the lynchers entered no charges; one, for alleged activities in labor organizations; one, by two white men, for a fatal traffic accident; one, in jail for murder pending a new trial ordered by the United States Supreme Court, was lynched in his cell; one, for attempting to qualify to vote; one, tried for murder, was lynched while the jury was deliberating its verdict.

\* \* \*

Of the eleven white persons lynched, five were accused of murder and one of rape; two were active in labor organizations; one was charged with robbery; one, with dynamiting a store; one, with cruelty to his wife. In this last instance, the lynched victim was flogged and left to die of exposure. Though it is generally believed he was the victim of the Ku Klux Klan, this has not been proved.

#### Lynchings Are Not What They Seem

With the change in the size of the mob, the disappearance of the man hunt, the absence of sadistic torture, and elimination of major crimes as an excuse for lynching, the pattern of lynching had undergone so marked a change by

1936 as to raise doubts of the validity of designating as lynchings certain types of murder.<sup>1</sup> Governor Frank M. Dixon, of Alabama, insisted that the two lynchings in his State in 1940 were not lynchings. State officials of North Carolina and prominent citizens, including Jonathan Daniels, Editor of the Raleigh *News and Observer*, took the same position on the alleged lynching in 1941 in Gaston County.<sup>1</sup>

Some murders are so shrouded in mystery that their classification as lynching is purely arbitrary, apparently depending upon the personal attitude of the classifier. If the murdered man is a Negro, it is taken as *prima facie* evidence that his murderers were white men.

A man is out fishing. He discovers a body on the banks of a creek. It is clearly evident that the man was murdered. Maybe his body is riddled with bullets—his feet wired together, his hands tied behind him, his head bashed in. There have been no reports of any trouble in the county. Was he lynched or was he murdered?

A man has given offense to his neighbor. Maybe his cow or his hog has repeatedly broken through the division fence and destroyed the crop. One morning the offending person is reported missing. Weeks pass and still he is missing. No one has seen him for several months. No body is found. Has he been lynched, murdered, or did he leave town?

Another man has an altercation with his employer over a lost tool, or the amount of wages due him, or failure to carry out orders. His body is found one day. It is evident from its condition that the man was put to death. Did he meet his death at the hands of three or more persons? Was he suspected or accused of a crime? Were the officers of the law forewarned of his danger and did they act in collusion with the killers?

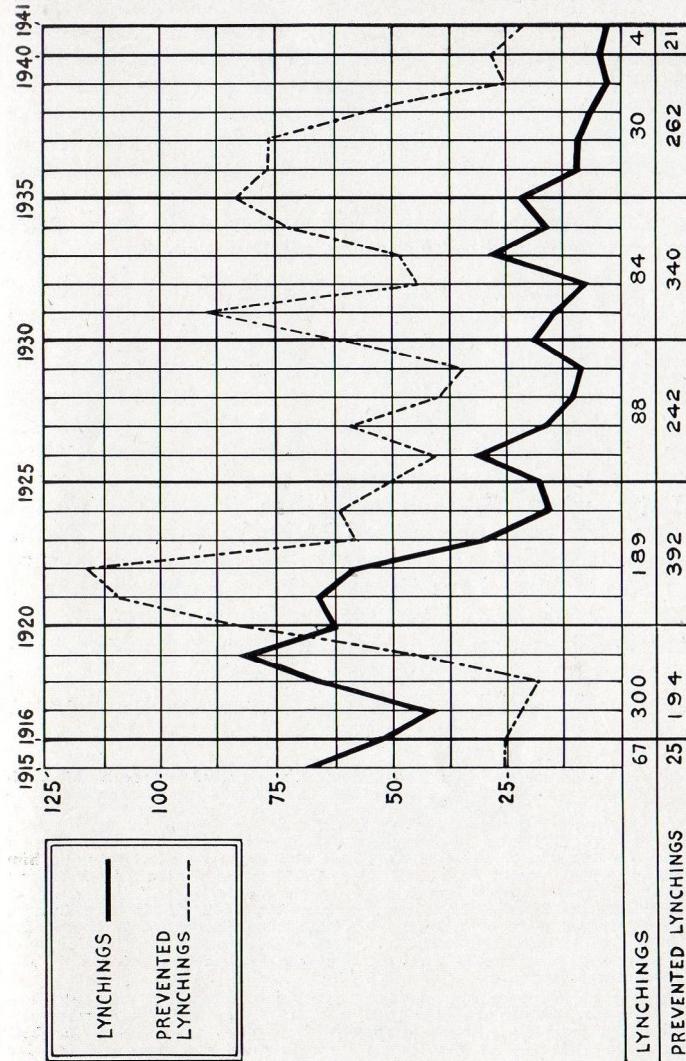
The charge, increasingly made against the South, that countless lynchings about which the public knows nothing are committed each year is based upon the known deaths of Negroes in one or more of the briefly outlined instances. They argue that, in the light of the history of the South's treatment of Negroes and in view of the fact that only by accident were the deaths of these Negroes discovered, there are others which never have come to light. However, there is no evidence that countless unknown lynchings take place each year; there is no evidence that they do not take place.

<sup>1</sup>The Gaston County lynching was contested by the North Carolina press on the ground that it was the act of "four hoodlums" who went "on a rampage in which they killed a Negro. He was merely the victim of a bunch of drunks." The North Carolina courts acted with speed. Within ten days four men were tried and sentenced to terms from fourteen to twenty-five years. In this respect North Carolina set another record for other Southern states to equal.

## THE MOB SPIRIT SUBSIDES

No discussion of lynching is complete without a word or two on prevented lynchings. Officers are freely condemned, and rightly so, when they are suspected of being less than diligent in preventing a lynching, yet the long roll of those who have outthought and outmaneuvered mobs is too frequently ignored. For years the number of lynchings have grown fewer, as have also the number unsuccessfully attempted. (Graphs II, III.)

Yet she  
opposed across the board  
federal  
laws &  
punish  
the officers  
of countries  
in which  
lynchings  
occur



Graph III  
Mob Spirit Subsides

This phenomenon may indicate that there is a real subsidence in the mob spirit. Busy people have less opportunity to congregate and discuss their grievances and to look for an outlet for their frustrated emotions. They work off their energies in gainful employment and their leisure time is spent in satisfying activities. Back of all mob outbursts are psychological factors which are not responsive to reason.

In 1914 the Department of Records and Research of Tuskegee Institute enlarged its program on lynching statistics to include the number of lynchings prevented. From 1914 through 1919 lynchings committed exceeded the number of lynchings prevented two to one, with the peak of the difference reached in 1918 when for every lynching prevented 3.37 lynchings were committed. Not until 1920 were more lynchings prevented than were committed.<sup>1</sup>

Not enough emphasis has been placed on this phase of mob violence. Counties do not punish leaders of attempted lynchings; officers are grateful if they can circumvent the mob without offending the individuals in the mob. Usually if this can be done by "spiriting the prisoner to an unknown jail" for safekeeping, mobs disperse of their own accord. However, if the leaders refuse to believe the officers, they are permitted to go through the jail and look for the prisoner. Later, when the mob spirit has died out and it is safe to do so, the prisoner is brought back for trial. This is not the only form of appeasement the officers extend to mob-minded citizens. Investigations have disclosed that in more than one prevented lynching a bargain was entered into between officers and would-be lynchers before the trial began in which the death penalty was promised as the price of the mob's dispersal. With the decreasing number of

<sup>1</sup>Tuskegee Year Book. Ninth Edition.

2Lynchings and prevented lynchings have almost no unexpected or inexplicable variation from the pattern developed in the past fifty years. Yet such a variation appeared in June, 1941, in a "planned" lynching in Georgia. The lynchers, themselves, changed their minds and returned their victim to the Dodge County Jail from which they had abducted him. The mob, seven hundred strong, drove their victim out of town at the head of a procession of 100 cars, then beat him up in an effort to make him confess to an attempted assault on a sixty-five-year-old white woman. After failing to get a confession, they returned him to jail "for want of evidence." Later a jury at Macon acquitted the Negro. Still later, in January, 1942, "Eddie Lee Spivey, only man ever returned alive by a lynch mob," sued the Dodge County sheriff for \$5,000 for failure to perform his duties. . . . "Spivey claims the sheriff voluntarily turned jail keys over to the mob . . . so they could come and get him." The suit was settled out of court.

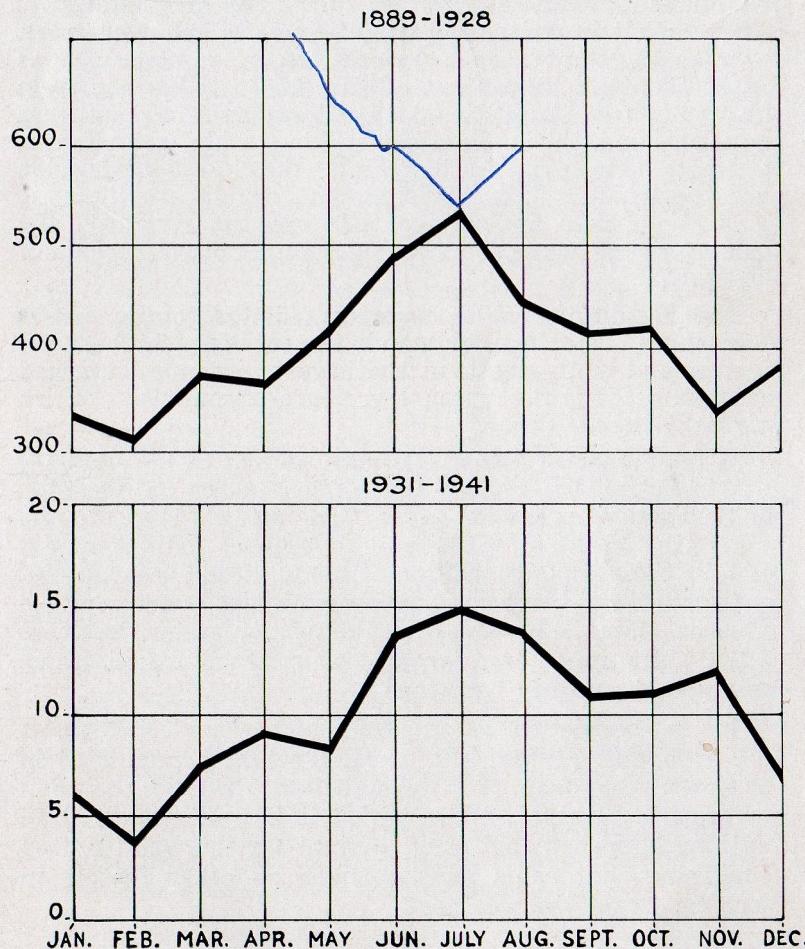
Another variant of the usual in prevented lynchings appears in that at Roxboro, North Carolina. On August 15, 1941, a mob of two hundred stormed the county jail bent on lynching a Negro charged with rape of a white woman. The mob was dispersed. But ten of the leaders were arrested and later indicted for "unlawful assembly and inciting a riot." At the April, 1942, term of court, five were convicted of unlawful assembly and sentenced to the chaingang—two for eighteen months; three for twelve months.

One prevented lynching of no outstanding features has an unusual end. In 1935 in Leake County, Mississippi, a prevented lynching was reported. A Negro, Willie Lewis, was accused of assault with intent to rape. He was removed to the jail for safekeeping. He was convicted and given "life." In May, 1942, Lewis was paroled after serving seven years of a life sentence for a crime of which he was "not guilty." The Governor is expected to give Lewis a full pardon in the near future.

attempted lynchings and with the change in mobs and mob violence itself, no suspicious prevented lynchings have been reported in the last three years.<sup>2</sup>

#### FORCES, NEW AND OLD, CHECK MOB VIOLENCE

It is easier to discuss the decrease in lynchings as a statistical fact than it is to account for this decrease. The immediate causes of lynchings may be the commission of a grand or petty crime; or some offense to an individual for which revenge is taken; or some defiance of local custom controlling the proper attitude of Negroes toward white people. The remote and hidden causes are more difficult to determine. The Southern Commission on the Study of



Graph IV  
Lynching By Months

Lynching supported the belief that the weather was one probable factor (Graph IV), as the majority of lynchings were committed during the three midsummer months, but that "midsummer unemployment, landlord-tenant relations in summer, and other factors greatly modify any all-weather explanation."<sup>1</sup> Other conditions, which the study revealed as characteristic of summer months, modifying the weather factor were idleness following cultivation of crops, two-thirds of the farm workers being wage hands or tenants. "During the slack work summer months, there is a great deal of visiting, loafing, gambling, and general 'carousing about' and inevitably an unusually large amount of crime."<sup>1</sup>

The report pointed out, in developing the landlord-tenant relation as a conditioning factor to the rise of lynchings in summer, that in winter the tenant tends to behave himself in order to get or keep his place, but by summer he has gotten about all he can out of the landlord; his equity in the crop is used up; his industry is lessened as a result. On the other hand, the landlord has still to get his cash returns, for which he is compelled to exercise the closest supervision over the tenant. "Thus in summer, tenants are likely to be more hopeless and antagonistic and the landlords and their overseers more domineering than at other periods of the year."<sup>1</sup>

Other conditions which have contributed to the causes of lynching are crime, for which the rates are highest for Negroes and white people at the lowest economic level, and inadequate police protection for Negro communities which "virtually breeds crime."<sup>2</sup>

On the factor of racial attitudes as one to be reckoned with in listing the remote and hidden causes of lynching, the Southern Commission says: "The public's low estimate of his (the Negro's) worth and consequent indifference to his fate, the ready assumption of his guilt, his ignorance of court procedure, his lack of money and friends and political influence, all make his arrest and conviction easier than that of the white man. In a large measure these are the same factors that produce lynchings."<sup>2</sup>

This is the picture as of 1930. In the next five years, 1931-1935, fall 71 per cent of all lynchings committed in the eleven years from 1931 through 1941. In 1936, the number dropped to eight, above which it has not risen. Had anything happened that could account for this sudden drop—anything that could have changed all other factors in lynching except the weather?

<sup>1</sup>"Lynchings and What They Mean," page 12. This pamphlet is an abridged edition of "The Tragedy of Lynching," the 500-page volume giving a detailed report of the findings of the Southern Commission on the Study of Lynching.

<sup>2</sup>Idem. 18.

### The Southern Press Takes a Stand

Editorially a few of the largest daily papers<sup>1</sup> of the South had for years waged a vigorous battle against lynching, but with certain reservations. So long as a certain crime was committed by Negroes, lynchings would continue. This reservation was part of the mechanism which helped to fix in the public mind that lynchings for some causes were justified. Smaller daily papers and weekly papers supported this point of view.<sup>2</sup> During the first five years of the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching, warnings were issued to Southern women that for their own protection they should abandon their movement against lynching for any cause. Ridicule and sarcasm were used to dissuade them. This was not, however, an unanimous procedure, for certain daily papers supported the women with praise and encouragement. After 1936 there were few daily newspapers which did not condemn any lynching regardless of the alleged crime of the victim.

With the best editorial intentions to blot out lynchings, the press still supported the mob in its news columns.<sup>3</sup> This contradiction in policy in the news columns equalized, if it did not actually nullify, the effect of the editorial column. In these later years, few lynchings make the front pages; even fewer are given banner headlines. Probably no other public-opinion-forming agency has done more to change the public's attitude toward lynching than has the Southern press.

### The New Deal Reaches Lynchers

In 1934-1935, when the New Deal created its numerous alphabet agencies to raise the depressed areas above sub-standard existence, it could have thought of lynching as an evil which would be affected, but such farsightedness is not claimed for it. Nevertheless without regard to intention, a by-product of the program of several of its agencies has been effective in helping to remove some of the causes that the Southern Commission on the Study of Lynching had asserted were factors in lynching. One of these, the Civilian Conservation Corps Camps, took the idle, unemployed, and illiterate or near illiterate youth of both races out of their communities and gave them work under supervision; paid them and their families cash money for this work; taught them reading, writing and a vocation; built up healthy minds in well bodies. The Civilian Conservation Corps removed these actual and potential lynchers<sup>4</sup> from the environment which favored mob violence.

<sup>1</sup>See "The Tragedy of Lynching" for the names of some of these papers.

<sup>2</sup>See Appendix II.

<sup>3</sup>See Appendix III.

<sup>4</sup>"Tragedy of Lynching," pages 266-324, points out that in mobs of 1930 'teen age boys were conspicuously present.'

The Works Progress Administration did for adults much the same service that the Civilian Conservation Corps did for the boys. Men and women of both races, farm workers thrown into complete idleness and destitution by the Government's crop reduction program, were given jobs—possibly nonessential jobs, such as raking leaves, for which they were paid cash money—more cash money than they had ever had as wage hands on farms. They were thus removed from complete dependency on landlords. The Works Progress Administration was effective in breaking down the landlord-tenant relation to the benefit of Southern society and the tenant, and in a degree to the landlord.

In 1935, another agency, the Resettlement Administration, which later became the Farm Security Administration, was created. Through its service to farmers without regard to race, reputable farm tenants who had been small land-owners and wage hands who were once tenants were restored to status; debt-ridden, bankrupt, and poverty-depressed families of both races were given a new lease on life. In 1935, Tuskegee Institute reported the number of lynchings as twenty. In 1936, lynchings had dropped 40 per cent, a drop which continued downward until in 1941 the record of lynchings had fallen 60 per cent.

#### State Patrols Curb Mobs

Since once before in 1932 the number of lynchings had been as low as eight, only to rise to a new high of twenty-eight the next year, no great importance was attached to this reduction as an evidence of a lasting change in lynching figures. But when 1937 ended and the record was still eight, the Association of Southern Women for the prevention of Lynching, not an organization of too great optimism, began to look for some new situation in the South which might be influencing the lynching spirit. This was found in the spread into Southern states of the national movement to establish state radio police patrols. A survey of state patrol systems early in 1938 disclosed some interesting and encouraging information. In six of the states which had perfected their systems, the state patrol had been called out to protect citizens, disperse mobs, prevent mob violence, and maintain order in tense situations. With increasing efficiency and additional equipment in these states, and with the extension of their duties to law enforcement in the other Southern states, state patrols were enabled to provide police protection, the inadequacy of which the Southern Commission on the Study of Lynching had defined as a factor contributing to the incidence of mobs and lynchings. The organization of state patrols undoubtedly influenced not only the reduction in the number of lynchings, but also the decrease in the number of attempted lynchings.

#### Tuskegee Institute Sees Results of Its Work

The effect of the New Deal and state patrols on lynchings can be considered only incidental to the purposes for which they were established—something in the nature of an unexpected by-product which possibly would not have been precipitated in full strength had it not been for other movements, long at work, directed specifically to the elimination of lynchings. One of these, and the oldest, is Tuskegee Institute. An educational institution, in the limited meaning of education, it has followed a policy and a strategy throughout its sixty years which have been useful in awakening the South's consciousness to the prevalence of lynching within its borders. It makes no investigations of reported lynchings, nor does it question the truth or falsity of accusations against the victims. Subscribing to several clipping bureaus, the Department of Records and Research accepts the stories the newspapers print. Only when the story of an "underground" lynching is rumored does the Institute put forth efforts to secure confirmation. The Department of Records and Research keeps a permanent statistical record of all lynchings committed in the Nation dating from 1882—the names of the victims, their race and sex; the crimes with which they were charged; the localities, state and county, in which they were lynched; the size of the mob and the manner in which the victims met their death. Twice a year since 1913 the Department has issued to the press a report of bold, terse statistics, giving the number of lynchings for the current year.

How much attention the Southern white press gave to Tuskegee Institute's press service in the early years is not known, but during the last twenty years white newspapers of the South have come to accept its statistics as official; to carry the news releases and to use them editorially either to express relief if no lynching had occurred in their state, or regret that their state had been blackened by mob violence. Southern newspapers have used these reports as the occasion for some of the most scathing editorials against lynchers and lynching which have ever appeared in print.

Not until recent years have the reports been attacked by the South's white press. The basis of the attacks lies in the interpretation of what constitutes a lynching. The public mind throughout fifty years has been shaped to accept certain conditions as characteristic of lynchings—a huge mob of maddened citizens; a Negro criminal guilty of a capital offense; execution with rope and faggot. In these last years, especially the past three, few lynchings have had any of these characteristics. A quiet mob of three white men who flog a Negro to death for having failed to have proper respect for one of the three in the opinion of many white people ought not be classified as a lynching. But, in

spite of differences of opinion, the Southern white press will accept the reports from Tuskegee Institute as being as nearly official as a private agency can make them.

#### National Association For Advancement of Colored People Claims Credit

Next in point of age is the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, a biracial organization which, as its name implies, carries on a program of racial improvement on many fronts. Its membership is composed of white persons, almost all of whom live outside the South, and of Negroes within and without the South. The National Association relies upon the force of the law to advance the cause of the Negro race. Since 1921 it has sponsored Federal antilynching legislation as one point in its program of racial advancement. Sometimes it has concentrated its more spectacular activities on this and at other times seemingly has abandoned it.

From 1933 to 1939, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People directed the major part of its energies to the passage of a Federal antilynching bill. The times appeared to warrant the belief that at last, after more than a decade of intermittent effort, it would be victorious. The bill did not pass, but the N.A.A.C.P. believes that the reduction in the number of lynchings is directly due to the fear that its nearly successful legislative activities put in the hearts of Southern sheriffs and the South generally.

#### Commission on Interracial Cooperation Initiates Programs

The Commission on Interracial Cooperation, chronologically the next to deal specifically with lynching, has supplemented the activities of Tuskegee Institute with research, investigations of lynchings, and publication of material dealing with lynchings. The membership of the Commission, composed of Southern white people and Southern Negroes, has followed throughout the policy of education and persuasion. Its methods have included conferences with leading religious, civic, and educational organizations and the preparation of literature for these organizations especially adapted to their machinery and program. Convinced that there was a need for more facts on lynching, the Commission authorized the creation and financing of a special committee of Southern men to make a study of each lynching of the year 1930.<sup>1</sup> In 1933, the results of the study were published by the University of North Carolina Press under

the title "The Tragedy of Lynching" compiled and written by Dr. Arthur Raper, at that time Research Secretary of the Commission on Interracial Cooperation.<sup>1</sup>

Before the field work of the Southern Commission on the Study of Lynching was begun, the Commission on Interracial Cooperation invited a group of leading church women to meet in Atlanta to discuss the causes of lynching. This was done in the belief that the excuse that lynchings were necessary for the protection of womanhood offered Southern white women an unusual opportunity to perform a genuine service to the South. Out of this meeting grew the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching,<sup>2</sup> sponsored and financed but not controlled by the Commission on Interracial Cooperation.

#### Southern White Women Deny Lyncher's Claims<sup>3</sup>

In general, the program of the Southern women has been directed to exposing the falsity of the claim that lynching is necessary to their protection and to emphasizing the real danger of lynching to all the values of the home and religion. Its methods have been in part those followed by the Commission on Interracial Cooperation and in part those devised to meet the situations as women saw them. State Associations have been set up; methods to prevent lynchings developed and followed; investigations made of lynchings allegedly involving crimes against white women; public forums held in small towns and county seats; flyers, pamphlets, posters, one-act plays written, published, and distributed.

By 1940, having tried out and established its most effective methods of education, the Association, through its Central Council extended its program of education of public opinion against lynching to include a presentation of the effect of the white primary on white people.<sup>4</sup> This decision was reached as the result of a growing realization that Negroes as a voteless people in a Democracy were a helpless people, and that this condition of helplessness contributed to a belief in inherent racial superiority on the part of white people and encouraged disregard for the rights of minorities.

One danger that the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching foresaw, as lynching decreased, was that some lynchings, with little reader interest outside the localities where they were committed, would not come

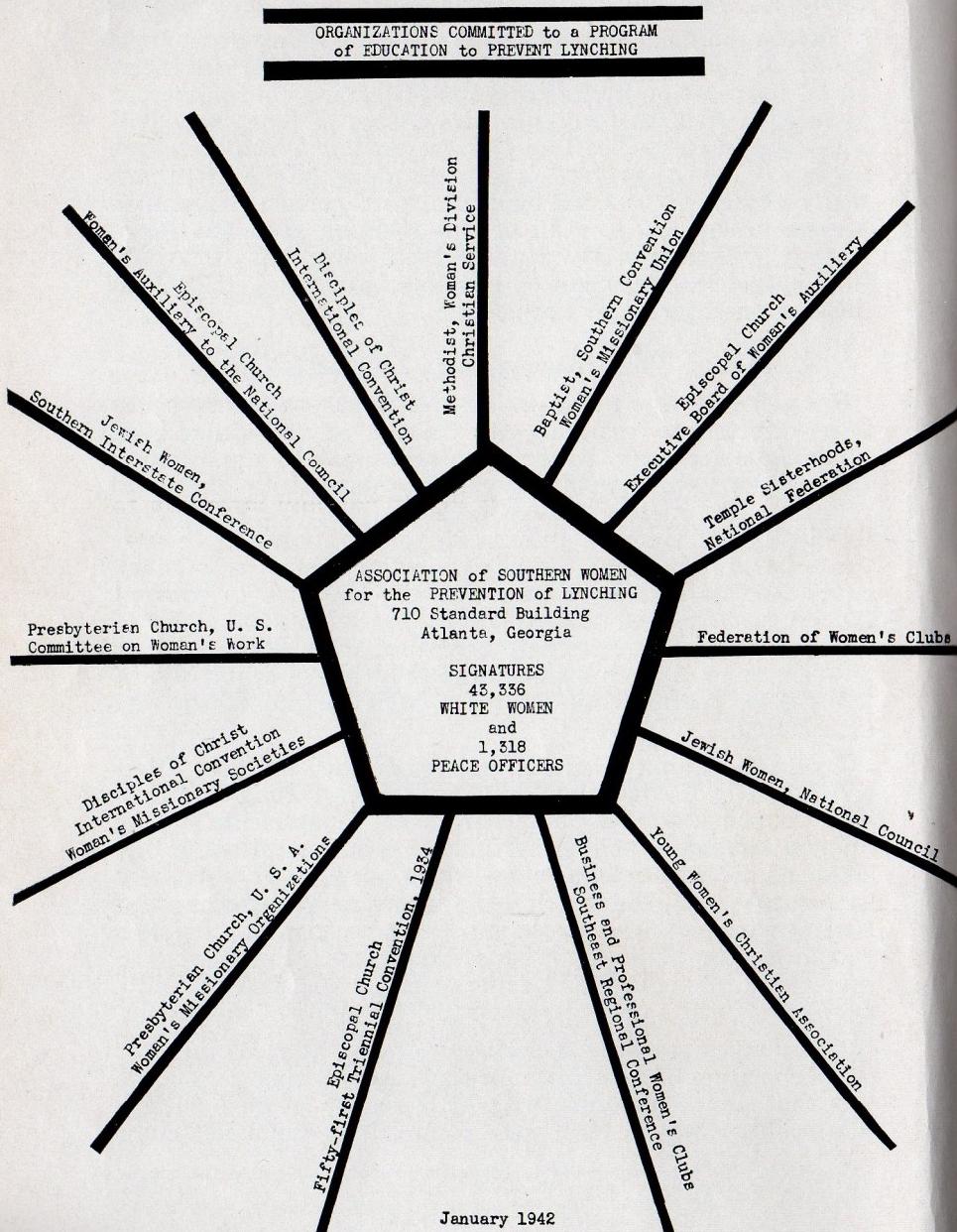
<sup>1</sup>Dr. Raper, chief of research and investigation, was ably assisted in the general field of investigation by Professor Walter R. Chivers, of the Sociology Department of Morehouse College, Atlanta. Others who assisted were R. B. Eleazer, N. C. Young, Dr. and Mrs. J. J. Rhyne, and Orland K. Armstrong.

<sup>2</sup>It is the only one of the four organizations which has had the eradication of lynching as its only purpose.

<sup>3</sup>"Ladies and Lynchings." See Appendix V.

<sup>4</sup>"The White Primary—An Anachronism in the Year 1942," a flyer published by the ASWPL. See Appendix VI.

<sup>1</sup>See page 1—footnote.



to the attention of the general public. To meet this situation, the Association has organized its machinery to check on rumored lynchings and to give adequate publicity to the facts obtained.

The thoroughness with which the Association pursues this phase of its work is shown in the investigation of a reported lynching near Savannah, Georgia, in 1939. A local Negro paper had broadcast that a Negro, Charlie Williams, had been lynched. The minutest details of the lynching, even to the number of bullets fired, were given. In spite of this seemingly eye-witness account, the story did not ring true. The *Savannah Morning News*, August 4, 1939, tells the story of the investigation:

"Georgia's undeserved black mark for a 1939 lynching was erased yesterday afternoon when a city detective sergeant and a Methodist preacher located Charlie E. Williams, husky 33-year-old Negro, alive and hard at work at a fertilizer plant here."

"I heard I was lynched but didn't pay any attention to it 'cause I knew I was living.' That was the sage observation of the Negro who was listed as having been lynched by a group of white men at Woodcliffe, Georgia, in Screven County on Saturday night, March 11.

"Detective Sergeant E. A. Fitzgerald located Williams working with a gang of other Negroes on a salvage job at the plant of the Reliance Fertilizer Company on the Louisville Road about four o'clock. Along with Rev. J. O. J. Taylor, pastor of Grace Methodist Church, and several others, Sergeant Fitzgerald had been doggedly on the trail of the Negro for some weeks.

"Williams said when he first heard the report he knew his mother would be worried and wrote her a letter stating he was alive and working in Savannah.

"The Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching was responsible for the investigation."

Though the Commission on Interracial Cooperation in 1935 endorsed the principles of a Federal law, at no time has the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching endorsed or otherwise supported Federal anti-lynching legislation."

## PART II

### "DEFINITIONS ARE DANGEROUS"

#### The Congress Defines Lynching

The numerous anti-lynching bills introduced in the Congress over a period of two decades define lynching as the act of a mob of "three or more persons" committed against a person or persons which results in death. There have been wide differences in other details but, after years of seeming experimentation in working out these details so as to bring as many instances of mob action as possible under Federal control, the authors of anti-lynching legislation have accepted one definition more or less unanimously.

Any assemblage of three or more persons which shall exercise or attempt to exercise by physical violence and without authority of law any power of correction or punishment over any citizen or citizens or other person or persons in the custody of any peace officer, or suspected of, charged with, or convicted of the commission of any offense, with the purpose or consequence of preventing the apprehension or trial or punishment by law of such citizen or citizens, person or persons, shall constitute a "mob" within the meaning of this Act. Any such violence by a mob which results in the death or maiming of the victim or victims thereof shall constitute "lynching" within the meaning of this Act: **Provided, however,** That "lynching" shall not be deemed to include violence occurring between members of groups of law-breakers such as are commonly designated as gangsters or racketeers, nor violence occurring during the course of picketing or boycotting or any incident in connection with any "labor dispute" as that term is defined and used in the Act of March 23, 1932 (Sec. 2, 47 Stat. 70, H. R. 1507—Van Nuys).

This definition fits eighty of the one hundred and eighteen lynchings committed during the period 1931-1941, inclusive. In sixty-seven cases, all the conditions set forth in the definition were present: the mob consisted of "three or more persons;" it put to death "without the authority of law;" it seized "persons in the custody of peace officers," who were suspected of, charged with, or convicted of the commission of some offense;" it put to death the persons so seized and thus committed "lynchings." In the remaining thirteen of the eighty lynchings, the persons were not in the hands of the law, but all other conditions were present: the size of the mob, the accusation of a crime against the persons, the death of the victim.

The eighty lynchings are as follows:

<i>State and Town</i>	<i>Race</i>	<i>Accusation</i>	<i>Number in Mob</i>	
1931				
Alabama Haynesville	Negro	Rape	Not stated	Taken from jail
Louisiana Pointe a La Hache	Negro	Attempted rape	Not stated	Taken from jail
Maryland Salisbury	Negro	Murder	Community	Taken from officers
Mississippi Columbus	Negro	Wounding white farmer	Not stated	Taken from convict cage
Inverness	Negro	Attempted rape	Not stated	Taken from officers
Vicksburg	Negro	Attempted rape	Not stated	Not in hands of law
Missouri Maryville	Negro	Rape and murder	Several thousand	Taken from officers
North Dakota Schafer	White	Murder of six	Eighty	Taken from jail
Tennessee Union City	Negro	Attempted rape	Several hundred	Taken from jail
West Virginia Lewisburg	Two Negroes	Murder	Not stated	Taken from jail
1932				
Arkansas Crossett	Negro	Murder	Not stated	Taken from jail
Kansas Atwood	White	Rape and murder	Two hundred	Taken from jail
Kentucky Princeton	White	Dynamited store	Six cars	Taken from jail
Louisiana Wisner	Negro	Insulting white woman	Fifteen	Taken from officers
Texas Crockett	Negro	Entering white woman's room	Four men	Not in hands of law
1933				
Alabama Tuscaloosa	Two Negroes	Suspected murder	Fifteen	Taken from officers
Tuscaloosa	Negro	Rape	Six	Out on bond
California San Jose	Two whites	Kidnapping and murder	Community	Taken from jail
Georgia Lumpkin	Negro	Assaulted an officer	Not stated	Taken from jail
Warrenton	Negro	Murder	Fifty	Taken from doctor's office

<i>State and Town</i>	<i>Race</i>	<i>Accusation</i>	<i>Number in Mob</i>	
Louisiana Labadieville	Negro	Murder	Not stated	Taken from jail
Opelousas	Negro	Rape	Not stated	Taken from officers
Ringgold	Negro	Rape and murder	Not stated	Taken from officers
Maryland Princess Anne	Negro	Rape	Community	Taken from jail
Missouri St. Joseph	Negro	Rape	Community	Taken from jail
South Carolina Clinton	Negro	Altercation with white man	Four	Taken from jail
Ninety-six	Negro	Drawing gun on white man	Four	Taken from jail
Tennessee Huntsville	Two whites	Murder	Several men	Taken from jail

1934

Alabama Birmingham	Negro	Attack on three white women	Not stated	Not in hands of law
Florida Marianna	Negro	Rape	Community	Taken from officers
Tampa	Negro	Suspected of rape	Not stated	Taken from officers
Kentucky Hazard	Negro	Struck white man	Not stated	Taken from jail
Louisiana Bastrop	Negro	Accused of attempt to rape	Community	Taken from jail
Mississippi Lambert	Two Negroes	Attempted rape	Not stated	Taken from officers
Michigan City	Two Negroes	Murder	Not stated	Taken from officers
Texas Newton	Negro	Associating with white girl	Not stated	Taken from officers

1935

California Yreka	One white	Robbery	Twenty-five to fifty	Taken from jail
Florida Fort Lauderdale	Negro	Rape and murder	One hundred	Taken from officers
Tampa	One white	Labor leader	Eight	Taken from jail
Georgia Vienna	Negro	Resisting arrest	Four cars	Taken from sheriff

<i>State and Town</i>	<i>Race</i>	<i>Accusation</i>	<i>Number in Mob</i>	
Louisiana Franklin	Negro	Awaiting new trial ordered by U. S. Supreme Court	Six-eight	Shot to death in jail
Gretna	Negro	Attempted rape	Three	Shot to death in cell
Maringouin	Negro	Whipped man	Not stated	Taken from jail
Mississippi Columbus	Two Negroes	Attempted rape	Thirty-five	Taken from officers
Oxford	Negro	Murder	Fifty	Taken from jail
Pittsboro	Negro	Attempted rape	Not stated	Taken from jail
Slayden	Negro	Murder	Fifty	Not in hands of law
Wiggins	Negro	Rape	Three hundred	Not in hands of law
North Carolina Louisburg	Negro	Murder	Community	Taken from sheriff
Tennessee White Bluff	Negro	Slapped white woman in drink- ing joint	Five	Taken from officers
Texas Columbus	Two Negroes	Rape and murder	Community	Taken from officers
		1936		
Arkansas Lepanto	Negro	Attempted rape	Not stated	Taken from officers
Florida Greenville	Negro	Rape	Not stated	Not in hands of law
Georgia Cusseta	Negro	Rape	Not stated	Taken from officers
Dalton	Negro	Attempted rape	One hundred and fifty	Taken from jail
Danielsville	Negro	Attempted rape	Forty	Taken from jail
Pavo	Negro	Murder	Two hundred	Taken from officers
		1937		
Alabama Abbeville	Negro	Rape	Twenty-five cars	Taken from jail
Florida Tallahassee	Two Negroes	Murder	Four	Taken from jail
Milton	Negro	Unnatural crime	Four	Taken from officers
Mississippi Duck Hill	Two Negroes	Murder	Community	Taken from officers
Tennessee Covington	Negro	Murder	Six	Taken from officers
		1938		
Florida Perry	Negro	Rape	Not stated	Taken from officers
Georgia Arabi	Negro	Murder	Community	Not in hands of law

<i>State and Town</i>	<i>Race</i>	<i>Accusation</i>	<i>Number in Mob</i>	
Louisiana Ruston	Negro	Murder and rape	Community	Not in hands of law
Mississippi Wiggins	Negro	Rape	Two hundred	Not in hands of law
			1939	
Florida Panama City	White	Murder	Four-five	Taken from jail
			1940	
Georgia LaGrange	Negro	Attempted rape	Six	Taken from jail
			1941	
Florida Quincy	Negro	Attempted rape	Six	In hands of law
Georgia Blakely	Negro	Stealing	Three	Not in hands of law

### The Mob Kills "With Authority of Law"

The number of lynchings classified in this Division is small; all but one were committed in the years in which agitation for Federal legislation was renewed and pressed with increasing intensity and with greater expectation of its passage.

Five Negroes met death at the hands of posses and five Negroes were killed by officers of the law. One of these, the case of Claude Brooks, at Canton, Mississippi, 1938, is arbitrarily included as a lynching by Tuskegee Institute. In five of the ten lynchings, the victims were charged with no crime. In only two—Canton, Mississippi, and Fairfield, Alabama—was there protest on the part of citizens or officials against Tuskegee Institute's report. This may indicate that local public opinion does not, at the present time, accept excessive acts of posses as legal acts of duly sworn officials to the maintenance of law and order.

State laws provide that when, in the judgment of the sheriff or other official who is responsible for maintaining order and protecting society, it becomes necessary to increase his force in an emergency, he is authorized to swear in private citizens either individually as deputies or en masse as posses. Their acts, performed for the protection of society, thereupon become acts committed with the authority of the law.

Would the Federal definition apply to these instances in which officers or posses acted as the mob?

Would violation by a mob of the body of a victim killed by an officer or posse constitute a lynching?

Do sheriffs sometimes swear in a posse with the intention of legalizing a murder or lynching?

The following murders, committed "with authority of law" (1931-1941), are classified as lynchings:

<i>State and Town</i>	<i>Race</i>	<i>Accusation</i>	
Florida Jasper	Negro	Robbery and murder	Killed by posse
North Carolina Willard	Negro	Murder	Killed by posse
Texas Carthage	Negro	Attacking white woman	Killed by posse
	Negro	Assault and murder of white woman	Killed by officers
Georgia Moultrie	Negro	Mistaken identity	Killed by posse
Georgia Bainbridge	Negro	Criminal assault murder	Killed by officers
Mississippi Canton	Negro	No crime	Shot by two officers by mistake
	Negro	Murder	Killed by posse of seventy-five
Alabama Fairfield	Negro	Altercation with white man	Killed in the cell by officers

### Is It Murder or a Lynching?

Whenever the body of a white man is found with evidence pointing to death by violence, the white press assumes that murder has been done. When the body of a Negro is found pointing to death by violence, the Negro press assumes that a lynching has been committed. To sustain this latter assumption both Tuskegee Institute and the Negro press take the position that the nature of death proves that it is the work of a mob. In such instances, white persons question

the probability of the claim that one person of either race could not kill a man and, for reasons best known to himself, truss up the body, "riddle it with bullets," weight it, and throw it in the river. However, the record of Southern coroners and peace officers in investigations of murder in this Division is such as to lend color, if not legal support, to the claim of the Negro press that Negroes whose bodies are found under suspicious circumstances have been lynched.

The lynchings which come under this classification are as follows:

<i>State and Town</i>	<i>Race</i>	<i>Accusation</i>	
			1931
Mississippi Vicksburg	Negro	Attempted attack on white woman	Body found "riddled with bullets"
			1932
Ohio Ironton	Negro	Threatening two white men with knife	Body found in river, beaten up
Virginia Hume	Negro	Murder—husband and wife	Body found hanging by neck
			1935
Mississippi Hernando	Negro	Huey Long organizer	Body found shot, rope around neck
			1936
Georgia Atlanta	Negro	Familiarity with white woman	Body found trussed—shot
			1939
Mississippi Canton	Negro	Altercation with white mill boss	Body found in river shot, trussed
			1940
Alabama Luverne	Negro	Disrespectful to constable	Body found shot, in state of decomposition
Georgia Atlanta	White	Being cruel to wife	Flogged, body found
Tennessee Brownsville	Negro	Trying to register to vote	Body found in river—shot

### Federal Definition of Lynching is Broadened

If a person put to death by a group of three or more is accused of no offense, and if he is not taken from jail or from officers, is the group a "mob" and is the act of the group a "lynching" under the Federal definition? This question may appear to be quibbling, but the frequency with which this type of crime is committed and the vigor with which local citizens have denied that it constitutes a lynching give its consideration importance. It is in this classification of lynching that personal interpretation dominates. It is here that records of statistical agencies differ.

Tuskegee Institute and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, working separately, have seldom released to the press reports on lynchings which have agreed.<sup>1</sup> In July, 1940, Tuskegee Institute reported no lynchings for the first six months. The N.A.A.C.P., which issues one report only at the end of the year, attacked the report as false, and declared that actually there had been five lynchings up to July 1. This charge created such confusion that many leading newspapers of both the white and the Negro press pointed out that there was so much divergence in the reports that both Tuskegee Institute and the N.A.A.C.P. were losing the respect of the public. They said that the statistical bodies ought to get together on their reports.

With this in view Dr. Frederick D. Patterson, President of Tuskegee Institute, arranged a conference at Tuskegee Institute for December 11, 1940.<sup>2</sup> Though there was the Federal definition of lynching to guide them, the group was in agreement that, since the Congress, prohibited by the Constitution from enacting legislation on the basis of race, could not designate as a lynching acts of a mob based solely on the race of the victim, the definition should be broadened to cover such cases. This unofficial group at Tuskegee Institute, after consideration of the lynchings in 1940 not covered by the Federal bill, wrote a supplementary definition which met unanimous acceptance by those in attendance. The definition says:

"There must be legal evidence that a person has been killed, and that he met his death illegally at the hands of a group acting under the pretext of service to justice, race, or tradition."

<sup>1</sup>From 1931-1941 inclusive, the N.A.A.C.P. reports 185 lynchings; Tuskegee Institute reports 118.

<sup>2</sup>Present at the conference were Walter White, secretary of the N.A.A.C.P.; Ralph McGill, executive editor of the Atlanta *Constitution*; McClellan Van der Veer of the Birmingham *Age-Herald*; Mrs. Jessie Daniel Ames, Atlanta, and Mrs. W. A. Newell, Greensboro, N. C., director and secretary respectively of the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching; Dr. Ira DeA. Reid, professor of sociology, Atlanta University; Dr. Arthur Raper, author of "The Tragedy of Lynching;" Dr. Monroe N. Work, editor of the Negro Year Book and founder of the Department of Records and Research at Tuskegee; Ralph Davis, present director of the Department; Dr. F. D. Patterson, president of Tuskegee; Dr. Eli S. Marks, social science department, Fisk University; Howard Lee, Birmingham, secretary of the Southern Conference for Human Welfare; Earl W. Brown, *Time, Inc.*, and Claude A. Barnett, Director of Associated Negro Press, Chicago.

The weakness in this definition lies in the fact that it in effect could be made to convert into a lynching the death of every Negro at the hands of white persons. This was demonstrated in 1941 when the deaths of Melker in Gaston County, North Carolina, and of Tisdale at Andrews, South Carolina, were included in the five lynchings of that year. Jonathan Daniels in the *News and Observer* insisted that to list Melker's death as a lynching was "reducing lynching statistics into silliness." Certainly the county officers acted promptly in arresting the white men. There were no law's delays in sentencing them, nor time lost in appeals. All of them, within a month of the murder, where serving sentences for manslaughter ranging from fourteen to twenty-five years. The question raised in this instance was whether or not the white men acted "under pretext of service to tradition." Gaston County did not think so; otherwise the white men would have gone free. At Andrews, two of the white men in the fight which resulted in Tisdale's death were sentenced to prison. Was he lynched? The answer to both these questions hinged upon the answer to the question: Were the Negroes killed on "the pretext of service to justice, race, or tradition?" Tuskegee and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People said that they were. The Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching said they were not.

The classification of three other deaths as lynchings in this Division is open to serious question. At Aiken, South Carolina, 1933, a Negro acting as the agent of white bootleggers was suspected by them of double-crossing. They seized him and put him to death. This was a bootlegger's fight in which the race of the agent may or may not have entered. The next year at Darien, Georgia, two gangs of turpentine bootleggers had a gun fight in which one gang, two of whom were Negroes, surrounded the shack of the leader of the rival gang. When the smoke cleared, the rival had disappeared. There was no evidence that he had been killed. But if he had been, would his death be classed as a "service to justice, race, or tradition?" Near Daytona Beach, Florida, in 1939, a Negro taxi driver struck a twelve-year-old white boy in a traffic accident and killed him. A mob composed of the two brothers of the victim took the Negro from the constable and shot him. Though the race of the driver may have been the deciding factor in his death, this alleged lynching raises the question of the definition of a mob. Tuskegee Institute and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People by including this instance as a lynching indicate that in their judgment two persons constitute a mob. The Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching takes issue with this.

Except for these five cases, lynchings in Division IV are

indubitably lynchings—killings committed by a limited number of persons for personal reasons, but understood by the community as disciplinary measures, regrettable but accepted as necessary under the South's social code. No precise legal terms can be applied to these lynchings to distinguish them from murder, yet the South knows the spirit which inspired them. No protests by officials from the governor down can make such murders less than lynchings so long as the community, by its failure to punish the murderers, supports the act as accessories after the fact. Whether or not North Carolina and South Carolina have been blackened without cause by the listing of the murders in Gaston and Georgetown Counties as lynchings, their citizens have demonstrated that they do not support the murderers of Negroes acting "under the pretext of service to justice, race, or tradition."

The lynchings in this division are as follows:

<i>State and Town</i>	<i>Race</i>	<i>Accusation</i>	<i>Number in Mob</i>	
1931				
Florida				
Blountstown	Two Negroes	Attacking forest ranger, out on bond	Not stated	Ambushed and shot
1933				
Georgia				
Newton	Negro	No charge	Fifty	Shot and hanged
Newton	Negro	No charge	Fifty	Shot and hanged
Louisiana				
Homer	Negro	No charge	Three	Flogged to death
Mississippi				
Caledonia	Negro	Familiarity with white woman	Ten	Hanged and body thrown in creek
Louisville	Negro	Engaged in altercation with white	Seventeen	Flogged and shot
Minter City	Negro	Striking a white man and being too smart	Not stated	Body riddled with bullets and dragged through town
South Carolina				
Aiken	Negro	Stealing bootleg selling it and keeping money	Four	Flogged to death
Greenville	Negro	No charge	Masked band of men	Shot to death
Tennessee				
Columbia	Negro	Cleared by grand jury for want of evidence on charge of rape	Seven	Hanged

<i>State and Town</i>	<i>Race</i>	<i>Accusation</i>	<i>Number in Mob</i>
1934			
Georgia Darien	Negro	Turpentine bootleggers	Four
Louisiana Bethany	Negro	Rape of Negro girl	Not stated
Mississippi Bolton	Negro	Writing letter to white girl	Three
Pelahatchee	Negro	Speaking dis- respectfully to young white man	
Tennessee Manchester	Negro	Striking white man	Eight
1936			
Georgia Atlanta	Negro	Resisting arrest shot five times in back	Five
1939			
Florida Daytona Beach	Negro	Traffic accident	Two
1941			
North Carolina Gaston County	Negro	Altercation with white man	Four
South Carolina Andrews	Negro	Labor trouble	Two

### LYNCHING BY STATES

LYNCHINGS	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939	1940	1941	Total
Alabama	1	0	3	1	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	8
Arkansas	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
Florida	2	1	0	2	2 (1w)	1	3	1	2 (1w)	0	1	15
Georgia	0	0	4	1	2	6	1	1	0	2 (1w)	1	18
Kentucky	0	1 (w)	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Louisiana	1	1	4	2	4	0	0	1	0	0	0	13
Mississippi	3	0	3	6	7	0	2	3	1	0	0	25
North Carolina	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	3
South Carolina	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	5
Tennessee	1	0	3 (2w)	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	8
Texas	0	1	2	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
Virginia	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total South	8	6	24	15	19	8	8	6	3	5	4	106
California	0	0	2 (w)	0	1 (w)	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Kansas	0	1 (w)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Maryland	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Missouri	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
North Dakota	1 (w)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Ohio	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
West Virginia	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Total United States	13	8	28	15	20	8	6	3	5	4	118	

(w) Indicates white victims.

## APPENDIX

### I

#### LYNCHINGS BY STATES—1931-1941

##### ALABAMA—8

###### 1931

Haynesville, Lowndes County, August 5: Neal Guinn, Negro, charged with attempted criminal assault on an eleven-year-old white girl, was captured by posse of citizens and shot "thirty-two times."

###### 1932

No lynchings

###### 1933

Tuscaloosa, Tuscaloosa County, August 13: Dan Pippen and A. T. Hardin, Negroes, were taken from officers by a mob of fifteen men and shot. They had been arrested on suspicion in the murder of a white girl.

Tuscaloosa, Tuscaloosa County, September 24: Dennis Cross, a paralyzed Negro, was decoyed from his home at 2 A.M. by a group of six or seven and shot to death. He was out under bond on a charge of assaulting a white woman.

###### 1934

Birmingham, Jefferson County, August 23: Three women crossing a park on the way to church were held up by an unidentified Negro. Two of them were thrown as they scuffle to get hold of the gun while one ran about a block to a tent meeting to give the alarm. Men hurried from the tent and began chasing a Negro who almost made his escape because of darkness. He was cornered in an alley and shot. He died in the hospital next day without regaining consciousness. All three women identified him. "Police have not decided who fired the fatal shot that killed the Negro."

###### 1935-1936

No lynchings

###### 1937

Abbeville, Henry County, February 2: Wes Johnson, Negro, accused of criminal assault on a white woman, was taken from the custody of Sheriff J. L. Corbitt by a mob in twenty-five cars, hanged, and his body "riddled with bullets." Attorney General of Alabama declared that he would prove "the wrong Negro was lynched." Impeachment proceedings were brought against the sheriff, who was exonerated by a 4 to 2 vote.

###### 1938-1939

No lynchings

## 1940

Fairfield, Jefferson County, May 9: O'Dee Henderson, Negro, charged with an altercation with a white man, was beaten and then shot to death in his cell by three officers of the law and one civilian.

Luverne, Crenshaw County, June 28: Jesse Thornton, Negro, was overheard speaking disrespectfully of a local peace officer. A week later his body was found, full of bullet holes, in a remote spot on the bank of a nearby stream.

##### ARKANSAS—2

###### 1931

No lynchings

###### 1932

Crossett, Ashley County, September 15: Frank Tucker, Negro, was taken from jail and hanged from a light pole near center of business district. He was accused of slashing the throat of deputy sheriff.

###### 1933-1935

No lynchings

###### 1936

Lepanto, Poinsett County, April 29: Willis Kees, Negro, accused of an attempted attack on a white woman, was taken from the city marshal by a masked mob and shot to death.

###### 1937-1941

No lynchings

##### CALIFORNIA—3

###### 1933

San Jose, Santa Clara County, November 27: John M. Holmes and Thomas H. Thurmond, white, were taken from jail by a mob estimated as over 6,000 and hanged in the public square. The two men were under arrest for kidnapping and murdering another white man.

###### 1935

Yreka, Siskiyou County, August 3: C. L. Johnson, white, was taken from jail by a mob of twenty-five to fifty men and lynched. He was charged with the murder of Chief of Police F. R. Daw of Dunsmuir. Johnson was taken twelve hours after the funeral of his victim. "I suppose they talked it over at the funeral and got up the mob," Deputy Sheriff Joe Clark said. Johnson had been moved from Dunsmuir to Yreka for safekeeping.

## FLORIDA—15

### 1931

Blountstown, Calhoun County, August 28: Richard and Charley Smoke, Negroes, charged with attacking forest ranger, out on bond furnished by employer were seized by a mob of unknown size and shot to death.

### 1932

Jasper, Hamilton County, June 6: Henry Woods, Negro, charged with robbery and murder, was killed by arresting posse, his body "riddled with bullets" and burned.

### 1933

No lynchings

### 1934

Tampa, Hillsborough County, January 24: Robert Johnson, Negro, under arrest for stealing chickens was shot to death after being taken from officer, T. M. Graves. The mob traveled in several cars.

Johnson, suspected of guilt in connection with rape on a young white woman was questioned by officers and released on insufficient evidence. He had confessed to stealing chickens some time before.

Marianna, Jackson County, October 26: Claude Neal, Negro, accused of rape and murder, was tortured to death by a small group of men. His body was later hanged on the Marianna Courthouse lawn. He was taken from the jail at Brewton, Alabama, where Florida officers had taken him for safekeeping, and brought back to the Florida County.

### 1935

Fort Lauderdale, Broward County, July 19: Reuben Stacey, Negro, was taken from Deputy Sheriff Virgil Wright by a mob of 100 masked men, hanged, and shot "seventeen times." He was accused of a murderous assault on a white woman.

Tampa, Hillsborough County, December 4: Joseph Shoemaker, Socialist labor leader, white, was taken from jail in police cars, carried to nearby woods, beaten, and left on the ground half clothed. He was taken to a hospital where he died a week later. Eight men, six of whom were city policemen, were indicted. No convictions.

### 1936

Greenville, Madison County, September 11: Buckie Young, Negro, charged with attack on a white woman, was shot to death by mob of unknown size. Coroner refused an inquest.

### 1937

Tallahassee, Leon County, August 2: Richard Hawkins and Ernest Powders, Negroes, charged with stabbing an officer, were taken from the jail two blocks from the Court-house and shot to death by a mob of four masked men. Governor Cone said, "This is a murder, not a lynching."

Milton, Santa Rosa County, October 3: J. C. Evans, Negro, accused of an "unnatural crime" against a white boy and robbery of a filling station, was taken from Sheriff Joe Allen and shot by a mob of four men, none of whom the sheriff recognized.

### 1938

Perry, Taylor County, August 9: Otis Price, Negro, charged with alleged rape, was taken from the sheriff by a mob of undetermined size and his body "riddled with bullets."

### 1939

Panama City, Bay County, April 1: Miles W. Brown, white, convicted of first degree murder with a recommendation of mercy, was shot to death after being taken from jail by a band of four or five masked men.

Daytona Beach, Volusia County, April 29: Lee Snell, Negro taxi driver, struck and killed a twelve-year-old white boy on a bicycle. He was taken from an officer and shot to death by two brothers of the accident victim.

### 1940

No lynchings

### 1941

Quincy, Gadsden County, May 13: A. C. Williams, Negro, charged with attempted rape upon a twelve-year-old white girl was beaten and his body "riddled with bullets."

## GEORGIA—18

### 1931-1932

No lynchings

### 1933

Warrenton, Warren County, May 11: Will Kinsey, Negro farm tenant, was taken from a doctor's office, where he had gone to be treated for gunshot wounds, and shot to death by a mob of fifty. Kinsey was accused of firing the shot that killed a white man in a gun battle between two Negroes and four white men, one the landlord.

Newton, Baker County, June 12: T. J. Thomas, Negro, was taken from his home, hanged, and shot a week after a

white man died from a gunshot wound in a fight with Negroes. Two Negroes arrested at the time were removed for safekeeping. T. J. Thomas was not in the fight.

Newton, Baker County, June 17: Richard Marshall, Negro, was taken by a mob and carried to the place where a white man had been killed the previous December. He was shot and hanged.

No causes for these two lynchings at Newton were given other than "as examples."

Lumpkin, Stewart County, October 23: Cephus Davis, Negro, was beaten and shot to death by a mob which took him from the Richland city jail. Davis had assaulted an officer who arrested him for drunkenness.

#### 1934

Darien, McIntosh County, October 9: A mob of fourteen turpentine bootleggers, two of them Negroes, surrounded the shack of James Curtis, Negro, another bootlegger, and opened fire. Curtis fired back. Later Curtis was reported missing.

#### 1935

Vienna, Dooley County, September 28: Lewis Harris, Negro, in custody for resisting arrest and forcing Sheriff Bos Vinson to relinquish a prisoner. The sheriff was overpowered by the mob in four cars as he was being taken "somewhere" for safekeeping. The victim was hanged and his body "riddled with bullets." The Vienna *News* declared editorially that there was no indication of mob action in the town.

Moultrie, Colquitt County, October 17: "Bo" Bronson, Negro, was beaten and shot by a posse hunting for another Negro, believed to have murdered a white man. Bronson died shortly after being admitted to a hospital. He was not implicated in the murder of the white man.

#### 1936

Cusseta, Chattahoochee County, March 14: Philip Baker, Negro, accused of attacking two white women, was hanged, and his body was "riddled with bullets" by a mob which took him from Chattahoochee County officers while he was being transferred from Macon to Columbus.

Danielsville, Madison County, April 28: Lint Shaw, Negro, was shot to death by a mob of forty men eight hours before he was to go to trial on a charge of attempted criminal assault. The mob broke into the jail at Royston, Georgia, where Shaw had been taken for safekeeping, the third in which the prisoner had been held.

Pavo, Thomas County, May 3: John Rushin, Negro, was snatched from a deputy sheriff by a mob of 200 men and shot to death in revenge for the slaying of a white man.

Dalton, Whitfield County, September 6: A. L. McCamy, Negro, accused of an attempted attack on a white woman, was taken from the county jail by a mob of about 150 and hanged. Sheriff J. T. Bryan found the body four hours later on a roadside beneath a tree from which the man had been hanged.

Atlanta, Fulton County, September 12: Tom Finch, Negro, for ten years orderly at the Grady Hospital, was taken from his home under the pretense that he was under arrest. Twenty minutes later his wife was called and told that his body had been dumped at the hospital door. The police department claimed that the Negro had resisted arrest and made an attempt to harm an officer, and that he was shot while fleeing. However, an examination of the hospital records revealed that he "was shot five times in the breast."

Atlanta, Fulton County, December 23: Mack Henry Brown, Negro, apartment house janitor, whose bullet-riddled, handcuffed, and foot-bound body was found floating in the Chattahoochee River at Roswell, Georgia, several weeks after he allegedly insulted an Atlanta white woman by kissing her hand, came to his death as the result of two bullets fired into his body by a party or parties unknown, a coroner's jury decided Tuesday afternoon following a two-day inquest conducted by Paul T. Donehoo, Coroner for Fulton County.

#### 1937

Bainbridge, Decatur County, May 25: Willie Reed, Negro, accused of murdering two white women and assaulting one of them, was killed by local officers, H. G. Pollock and R. A. Stephens, who were returning him to Bainbridge from Dothan, Alabama. His dead body was seized from a Negro undertaking establishment by a mob of 100 and burned, after being dragged through the town behind an automobile.

#### 1938

Arabi, Crisp County, July 6: John Dukes, Negro, after being mortally shot by an officer sent to arrest him for drunk and disorderly conduct, was seized by a mob "estimated at a hand full to several hundred." While still alive, but unconscious, he was dragged down the road several hundred yards, his body saturated with gasoline and burned.

#### 1939

No lynchings

#### 1940

Atlanta, Fulton County, March 7: Ike Gaston, white, was flogged by a gang of masked men and left in such a state of exhaustion that he was unable to make his way home, and died of exposure. The Grand Jury of Fulton

County investigated Gaston's murder, but no indictments were returned. He was charged with drinking and being cruel to his wife. His body was found the following morning.

LaGrange, Troup County, September 8: Austin Callaway, Negro, was charged with an attempted attack on a white woman. He was taken from jail about midnight by six masked men and shot to death.

#### 1941

Blakely, Early County, May 6: Robert Sapp, Negro, suspected of stealing from his employer, was beaten unconscious with a club and a piece of machine belting by three men. He died several days later.

### KANSAS—1

#### 1932

Atwood, Rawlins County, April 18: Richard Read, white, attacker and slayer of eight-year-old white girl, was taken from the Rawlins County jail by a mob of 200 and hanged. The mob chased the officer from Colby County, where the crime was committed, through Cheyenne County and into Rawlins.

### KENTUCKY—2

#### 1931

No lynchings

#### 1932

Princeton, Caldwell County, June 1: Walter Merrick, white, was removed from county jail by an unidentified group in six automobiles late at night, carried into Princeton, and hanged. Merrick was charged with dynamiting a store at Hopson.

#### 1933

No lynchings

#### 1934

Hazard, Perry County, January 24: Rex Scott, Negro, accused of striking a white man, was taken from jail by a mob of coal miners from Knott County, carried to a place opposite a grave yard, hanged, and his body "riddled with bullets."

#### 1935-1941

No lynchings

### LOUISIANA—13

#### 1931

Pointe a La Hache, Plaquemine Parish, August 3: Oscar Livingston, Negro, charged with attempted rape, was taken from jail by mob of masked men and his body "riddled with buck shot."

#### 1932

Wisner, Franklin Parish, November 20: The body of William House, Negro, arrested for insulting two white women, was found dangling from a tree twenty-four hours after band of fifteen men had taken him from officers.

#### 1933

Homer, Claiborne Parish, January 12: Fell Jenkins, Negro, was flogged to death by three white men, according to the coroner's report. The report was made without recommendation and no arrests were made.

Ringgold, Bienville Parish, February 19: Nelson Nash, Negro, was taken from officers about an hour after he had confessed to burglary, murder, and attempted rape. He was hanged at the scene of the crime and about fifty bullets shot into his body.

Opelousas, Saint Landry Parish, September 26: John White, young Negro, was taken from officers by a mob and shot to death, his body "riddled with bullets." He was accused of rape.

Labadieville, Assumption Parish, October 11: Freddie Moore, young Negro, was taken from jail by a mob of unknown size sometime after midnight and hanged from a bridge. He was accused of the murder of a young white girl.

#### 1934

Bastrop, Morehouse Parish, July 9: Andrew McLeod, Negro, accused of attempted rape, was taken from jail in broad daylight, hanged on the courthouse square, and throat slashed.

Bethany, Caddo Parish, August 3: Grafton Page, Negro, accused of drunk and disorderly conduct, was flogged to death. He was not in the hands of the law.

#### 1935

Franklin, Franklin Parish, January 11: Jerome Wilson, Negro, was shot to death in his cell in the Parish jail by a mob of six or eight men. The Supreme Court of the United States had granted Wilson a new trial for the murder of officer Delos C. Wood. Sheriff J. C. Brock said, "There wasn't any lynching. There wasn't any mob. . . . There were just about six or eight men who were going about their business."

Maringouin, Iberville Parish, March 3: After he had whipped a white man who had drawn a gun on him, Anderson Ward, Negro, was taken from jail by a mob, "riddled with bullets," and hanged to an oak tree, where his body dangled for several hours before relatives were allowed to cut it down for burial.

Gretna, Jefferson Parish, November 1: Two unidentified Negro men, removed from mob-proof parish jail at New Orleans across the river to Gretna, were shot to death in their cell by a mob of three. They were accused of attempted rape.

#### 1936-1937

No lynchings

#### 1938

Ruston, Lincoln Parish, October 13: R. C. Williams, Negro, was taken by a mob of undetermined size and hanged to a tree, "riddled with bullets," and burned. Williams was accused of murdering a white man and raping his companion.

#### 1939-1941

No lynchings

### MISSISSIPPI—25

#### 1931

Vicksburg, Warren County, March 29: The body of Eli Johnson, Negro, charged with an attempted attack upon a white woman, was found "riddled with buck shot and bullet hole in head."

Inverness, Sunflower County, March 22: Steve Wiley, Negro, charged with an attempted assault, was taken from officers by a mob of unknown size and hanged.

Columbus, Lowndes County, November 6: Coleman Franks, Negro, was taken by a band of men from a cage in the convict camp, where he was held pending trial for wounding white man after a row, and was hanged.

#### 1932

No lynchings

#### 1933

Minter City, Leflore County, September 18: Richard Roscoe, Negro farmer, was seized at his home by a mob and shot. His "bullet-filled body" was fastened to an automobile, dragged through town and then taken back and deposited in the yard. He was accused of "striking a white man in a fight and being too smart."

Louisville, Winston County, July 18: Reuben Micou, Ne-

gro, was taken from his home by a mob of seventeen, flogged, shot and his body thrown into a drainage canal. Micou had engaged in an "altercation" with one of the seventeen.

Caledonia, Lowndes County, about July 10: A Negro tenant, name suppressed by local people, was seized by a "band of men" when he was coming in from the fields, held until after dark, then hanged and his body weighted and thrown into a nearby creek. The Negro was accused of "improper conduct toward a white woman." It was some ten days or more after the Negro disappeared when the body was found.

#### 1934

Lambert, Bolivar County, June 8: Joe Love and Isaac Thomas, Negroes, accused of attempted rape, were taken from officers and hanged.

Bolton, Hinds County, July 16: James Sanders, Negro, was shot by a mob of three "for writing an indecent letter to a white girl." Not in the hands of the law.

Three men—father, uncle, and cousin of the white girl to whom the letter was written—made the following sworn statement in court: After driving the Negro out a certain distance from town, they stopped the car. The Negro grabbed the pistol from the pocket of the father of the girl and began shooting, so they had to shoot the Negro in self-defense. The District Attorney "was present at the trial and recommended that the case be dismissed." A business man said, "It was something that just had to be done."

Pelahatchee, Rankin County, July 24: Henry Bedford, Negro, was flogged to death by a mob of four "for speaking disrespectfully to a young white man." Bedford was seized at his home.

The sheriff, notified a few hours after the flogging, went out and brought the Negro into the hospital where he died the next night. The four white men were arrested immediately. They were given trial in the city court, but were released several days later on bond to await the meeting of Grand Jury, which did not indict.

Michigan City, Benton County, August 13: Robert Jones and Smith Houey, Negroes, who were being brought to Ashland for trial for murder committed more than a year before, were taken from officers by a mob and hanged.

#### 1935

Columbus, Lowndes County, July 15: Dooley Morton and Bert Moore, Negroes, accused of attempted rape were taken from Deputy Sheriff Parker Harris by a motorcade mob of thirty-five men and hanged.

Oxford, Lafayette County, September 17: Elwood Higgenbotham, Negro, was taken from jail at 9:30 P. M., where

he awaited the verdict of the jury in his trial for murdering a white man, and hanged by a mob of fifty men. The jury had retired at 6 P. M.

Pittsboro, Calhoun County, August 5: Bodie Bates, Negro, suspected of attempting to attack a white girl was taken from the Calhoun County jail and hanged from a Yalobusha River bridge. Sheriff Jack W. Powell had meager information about the lynching.

Wiggins, Stone County, June 22: R. D. McGee, Negro, was captured by a mob of 300, hanged to an oak tree near the graveyard, "filled full of bullets," cut down and hanged to another tree near the highway. He was accused of criminally assaulting an eleven-year-old white child.

Slayden, Marshall County, March 12: Ab Young, Negro, was captured by a mob of about fifty men at Rossville, Tennessee, brought back and hanged in a school yard three miles east of Slayden. He was accused of killing a white highway employee.

Near Hernando, DeSoto County, March 28: The body of an unidentified Negro, with a rope round the neck and with bullet holes in it, was found in a gully near Hernando. Several of Huey Long's pamphlets "Every Man a King" were found in the pockets. A coroner's jury returned a verdict of suicide.

**1936**  
No lynchings

**1937**

Duck Hill, Montgomery County, April 13: Roosevelt Towns and Bootjack McDaniels, Negroes, accused of murdering a white storekeeper, were taken from Sheriff E. E. Wright, as they were being led from the courthouse at Winona after indictment proceedings, and burned to death with blow torches.

**1938**

Rolling Fork, Sharkey County, July 6: Tom McGehee, Negro blacksmith, was killed in gun battle with a posse of about seventy-five men after the murder of a white planter for whom he worked. Later a mob seized the body, poured gasoline over it, set it on fire, tied it to an automobile, and hauled it down to Rolling Fork.

Wiggins, Stone County, November 21: Wilder McGowan, Negro, "was lynched by a mob of two hundred men for the alleged choking, assaulting, and robbing of a seventy-four-year-old white woman. It was an 'orderly lynching.' Sheriff H. C. Hinton was sure there was 'no shooting and no disorder in the mob.' "

Canton, Madison County, July 29: Claude Brooks was shot by officers when he speeded up his car and refused to

halt when ordered. The officers had closed off streets in search of the murderer and robber of a white man. Brooks' companion, Jones, was placed in jail. Officers said both Negroes were innocent of any offense.

**1939**

Canton, Madison County, May 8: Joe Rogers, Negro, was understood locally to have had some difficulty with the foreman at the sawmill where he worked. Several days afterwards his body was found in Pearl River with hands and feet tied.

**1940-1941**  
No lynchings

**MARYLAND—2**

**1931**

Salisbury, Wicomico County, December 4: Mack Williams, Negro, charged with murder of his employer, was taken from a hospital cot by a mob of 2,000, hanged in front of the courthouse, and his body cremated.

**1932**  
No lynchings

**1933**

Princess Anne, Somerset County, October 18: George Armwood, Negro, was taken from the jail by a mob of over 5,000 men, women, and children, dragged a mile through town and hanged from a tree on the main street and his body burned. Armwood was accused of attacking a seventy-one-year-old white woman.

**MISSOURI—2**

**1931**

Maryville, Nodaway County, January 19: Raymond Gunn, Negro, charged with rape and murder, was taken from the sheriff by a mob of several thousand, carried to school house, site of the crime, where he was chained and hand-cuffed to rooftree, which was soaked with gasoline. The building was then set on fire.

**1932**  
No lynchings

**1933**

St. Joseph, Buchanan County, November 29: Lloyd Warner, Negro, was taken from jail by four men, hanged and his body burned, while a mob of 7,000 looked on. He was in jail on a charge of rape.

## NORTH CAROLINA—3

1931-1932

No lynchings

1933

Willard, Pender County, August 27: Doc Rogers, Negro farmer, was killed by a posse in a gun battle in which a deputy sheriff was wounded. The posse dragged the body around the courthouse square. Later Rogers' house was burned. The Negro and a white bootlegger had an altercation in which the Negro fired into the bootlegger's house.

1934

No lynchings

1935

Louisburg, Franklin County, August 3: Govan Ward, mentally deficient Negro, was taken from Sheriff J. T. Moore by a mob of Negroes and white men, hanged, and his "body riddled with bullets." He had chopped off the head of a white farmer with an ax in what Sheriff Moore said was apparently a mad frenzy.

1936-1940

No lynchings

1941

Gaston County (near Cherryville), April 13: Robert Melker, Negro, fighting with four white men, was shot to death in his home. All four men were convicted and are serving prison terms from ten to twenty-five years.

## NORTH DAKOTA—1

1931

Schafer, McKenzie County, January 29: Charles Bannon, white, accused of murder of a family of six, was taken from McKenzie County jail by a mob of eighty men and hanged from a bridge. No shots were fired.

## OHIO—1

1932

Ironton, Lawrence County, June 11: Luke Marion, Negro, had drawn a knife on two white men which angered the crowd of white people. Later his body, badly battered, was found in the river. Four white men were arrested at once; twelve others were under suspicion; six were later indicted.

## SOUTH CAROLINA—5

1931-1932

No lynchings

1933

Clinton, Laurens County, July 4: Norris Dendy, Negro, was taken from the county jail by four men and hanged. His body was found by Deputy Sheriff Thad Moore seven hours later badly beaten and still hanging. Dendy had been shot once.

Aiken, Aiken County, February 19: George Jeter, Negro, was flogged to death by four white men who accused him of stealing their bootleg liquor, selling it, and keeping the money.

Greenville, Greenville County, November 16: George Green, Negro, was shot to death by a masked, robed band of more than ten after he had been taken from his home. Authorities said they knew of no reason for the slaying.

Ninety-Six, Greenwood County, October 9: Bennie Thompson, Negro, was taken from jail by four men and beaten to death. He was lodged in jail on a charge of drawing a pistol on one of the white men.

1936-1940

No lynchings

1941

Andrews, Georgetown County, February 20: Bruce Tisdale, Negro, was beaten over the head in a fight with five white men and died in hospital five days later. Three of the men were convicted of manslaughter. Case is on appeal.

## TENNESSEE—8

1931

Union City, Obion County, April 17: George Smith, Negro, was hanged in the courthouse jail by a mob of several hundred people at 2:30 P. M. He was accused of attempted criminal assault on a young white girl.

1932

No lynchings

1933

Columbia, Maury County, December 15: Cord Cheek, twenty-year-old Negro, was kidnaped by a mob of seven and hanged near the scene of an alleged criminal assault on an eleven-year-old white girl. The Maury County Grand Jury had released Cheek earlier in the day for lack of evidence to indict him.

Huntsville, Scott County, June 8: Jerome Boyette and Harvey Winchester, white, accused of murder, were shot by a mob of several armed men. They were taken from jail.

#### 1934

Manchester, Coffee County, June 24: A Negro, Richard Wilkerson, was ambushed by a mob of eight and shot for striking a white man. He was not in the hands of the law.

A party of white men went to a Negro dance. They had some trouble with Wilkerson in regard to their conduct, reports say, toward a Negro girl. Wilkerson struck one of them. On his way home after the dance, Wilkerson was ambushed by eight white men, shot, stripped of his clothing, and beaten on the head with an axe.

These eight men were convicted of manslaughter and sentenced, but no record of their having served terms is available.

#### 1935

White Bluff, Dickerson County, November 4: Baxter Bell, Negro, struck a white woman who was in a Negro drinking joint. Arrested for assault and battery he was being taken to Ashland to jail when five men—husband of the woman and four relatives—overpowered the constable, took Bell across into Cheatham County. He was found thirty minutes later, dead with a shot through the lungs. The white men were acquitted.

#### 1936

No lynchings

#### 1937

Covington, Tipton County, August 17: Albert Gooden, Negro, accused of slaying an officer of the law, was taken from Sheriff W. J. Vaughn by six men and hanged. The sheriff was taking his prisoner back to Covington from Memphis where Gooden had been taken for safekeeping.

#### 1938-1939

No lynchings

#### 1940

Brownsville, Haywood County, June 22: Elbert Williams, Negro, attempted to qualify to vote. Trouble developed. Later his "bullet riddled body" was recovered from the Hatchie River.

#### 1941

No lynchings

#### TEXAS—6

##### 1931

No lynchings

##### 1932

Crockett, Houston County, April 2: Dave Tillis, Negro, while being taken to Crockett by his landlord to be turned over to the sheriff—for allegedly entering white woman's bedroom—was seized by four men, hanged to a blackjack tree. Five men were arrested, following investigation by Sheriff J. L. Hazlett.

##### 1933

Carthage, Panola County, May 23: W. C. Lovell, Negro, was cornered and killed instantly by officers and a large mob less than ten minutes after he had attacked a white woman.

Kountze, Hardin County, December 7: David Gregory, Negro, charged with assaulting and killing a white woman, was killed by officers while resisting arrest. The mob of about 400 seized the body, dragged it around for two hours or so, then dismembered and burned it on a bonfire in the Negro district.

##### 1934

Newton, Newton County, June 21: A Negro, Sonny Griggs, was hanged for associating with a white girl. He was taken from the sheriff who was removing him to Orange for safekeeping. The mob was estimated to have been several hundred.

##### 1935

Columbus, Colorado County, November 11: Ernest Collins, and Benny Mitchell, Negroes, were taken from Sheriff Frank Horgemeyer and deputies by a mob of 700 and hanged to a liveoak tree. They were being brought from Houston to Columbus to be tried for criminal assault and murder. County Attorney O. P. Moore said, "I do not call the citizens who executed the Negroes a mob. I consider their action an expression of the will of the people."

#### 1936-1941

No lynchings

#### VIRGINIA—1

##### 1931

No lynchings

##### 1932

Hume, Fauquier County, July 12: In the early morning of July 12, a farmer and his wife were attacked while sleeping in their home at Hume, Virginia. The report was that

the farmer was struck over the head, stunned by a stick of stove wood, and his wife dragged away and left about a half mile from their home where she was found later in a semi-conscious condition. The suspected attacker, Shadrick Thompson, Negro, had been sought in connection with the crime.

On September 15 his body was found near Linden, hanging from a tree. The coroner was immediately notified and viewed the body. "The body, therefore, came into the hands of the law. The law, however, did not retain possession of it, but permitted it to come into the hands of a mob which burned the body, distributing the victim's teeth as souvenirs, and placed his head on exhibition in the town of Warren-ton." (From Tuskegee report).

**1933-1941**  
No lynchings

**WEST VIRGINIA—2**

**1931**

Lewisburg, Greenbrier County, December 10: Tom Jackson and George Banks, Negroes, charged with killing Constables Joseph H. Myles and Jack Brown, were taken from jail by a mob of fifty and hanged. Bodies were "riddled with bullets."

**II**

**EDITORIAL TREATMENT OF LYNCHINGS\***

By JESSIE DANIEL AMES

Editorial treatment of lynchings offers an interesting and revealing study of public attitudes toward this peculiarly American custom. Environment and not personal inclination of editors determines the tone of opinion in almost every instance. As individuals, they are unanimously opposed to mob violence but, as editors who are caught in the general atmosphere of a given trade territory, they do not reflect their own ideas but those of the people upon whose goodwill their papers depend for revenue. They find themselves in the difficult position of a rider who must sit two horses at the same time, one standing facing backward, the other moving rapidly forward unencumbered by the harness of tradition. They must satisfy that part of the watchful public pressing in closest and upon whose approval they must rely for immediate revenue. But, also, they must offer assurances that the show is worth the investment of huge sums of money to that distant public whose worldly possessions are highly essential to the progress and development of the South.

Editors, with few exceptions, condone lynchings by offering reasons for lynchers which are in effect sympathetic excuses defending the right of citizens under provocation to take the law into their own hands and constitute themselves judge, jury, and executioner all at the same time. The exceptions are so few, in fact, that they do not make up even a respectable minority.

Newspapers and Southern society accept lynching as justifiable homicide in defense of society. When defenders of society sometimes go too far in their enthusiasm, as in the Winona, Mississippi, torch lynchings of 1937, public opinion regrets their acts, deplores them, condemns, but recognizes that too much blame must not be attached to lynchers because their provocation is great and their ultimate motives are laudable. This attitude of society in the South—this sympathetic understanding of a barbarous act while regretting the fact—influences editorial opinion.

**Outside Agencies Blamed**

Editors from time to time refer to the South's "peculiar situation" which must be handled entirely by native Southern people, without interference from "outside agencies." When such interference can be claimed, outside agencies become the spectacular scapegoat for local crime, bearing off into the wilderness all the sins and shortcomings of the community, leaving it . . . well, if not as white as snow, at least as white as it was before the lynching. Could there be any finer defense offered to lynchers than this editorial from a great, liberal, and influential daily paper:

Their bodies (the Negroes') were riddled with bullets by hot-heads who took the law in their own hands for fear that outside interference would block the course of justice. . . . But the maggoty beaks of the belled buzzards of the International Labor Defense League are stained with the blood of the three Negroes whose torn bodies this morning lie in newly turned graves.

The lynching community, to the last man, was quickly informed by its local paper that its citizens were cleared of crime by the press. The local paper, supporting its constituency, took up the defense offered by the Capital City daily in an editorial captioned "The Carpet Baggers of 1933" and carried the idea of patriotism to an amazingly high point of eloquence:

\*Reprinted from *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, Princeton, January, 1938.

They (the Negroes) died at the hands of an unidentified mob but they were LYNCHED by a communistic organization known as the International Labor Defense whose promoters may now enjoy to the fullest the havoc they have wrought.

There is almost visible a tear in the editorial eye for the hapless victims of the "communistic organization."

Nothing could be more delightfully restrained than this editorial rebuke on the same occasion from another state paper. Even a casual reader may detect the editor's dislike for unnecessary violence even in a good cause:

There can be no justification in flaunting the jurisdiction of the courts and committing murder even to show such a despicable outfit as the International Labor Defense, whose concern is not for the Negroes, that it is not wanted in Alabama.

Sorrowful regret, a few penitential tears, but for the most part an indignant and righteous wrath that a fine community had been forced to such extreme measures to protect society—those were the characteristics of editorial opinion in Alabama on the occasion of this double lynching. Editorial screams of justification were accepted as noble harmonies by the public. In an editorial three days after the lynching, the editor who described the outside agency as "belled buzzards" sighed gratefully in his paper:

Let us forget the embarrassment we have suffered at the hands of outsiders now that the outside world has agreed that the International Labor Defense shares our blame. A state that does not or cannot offer protection to the most lowly of its residents does not deserve the right to call itself a sovereign state.

All was peaceful again in Alabama. The country and the Alabama editors had accepted the lynchings as painful, regrettable, but excusable under the circumstances, something in the nature of a terrible cauterization of a poisonous snakebite, necessary to the preservation of community life. This accomplished, the editors called on the citizens of Tuscaloosa to clean house. The answer Tuscaloosa made to this appeal was another lynching within six weeks.

Thus were the editors of Alabama and the South again embarrassed. Their amazement and pain were genuine. They cried aloud in their anguish. But Tuscaloosa lynchers were quite logical. Their first sin had been forgiven and their second, like unto the first, also must be forgiven. In a front-page editorial spread over four columns, they found expression in part—even the "law-abiding citizens":

No lynching can be condoned but Tuscaloosa refused to take full responsibility for the Pippen-Hardin case and it had a right to refuse this responsibility. An outside agency inflamed the people to such a point that the community was tense with fear of racial disorders in which many lives would be lost, so when a handful of men took the matter in their own hands and put those Negroes to death a certain relief was undeniably felt by even the most thoughtful and law-abiding of our citizens.

#### The Dilemma of Editors

Editors are good citizens. As individuals they condemn lynching. Lynching gives the South the wrong kind of publicity. It makes it a bit more difficult to attract outside capital and to increase immigration of the right people. The South wants all possible "outside" agencies with money to invest to invade its section, but this invasion must come on local terms, chief of which is that the native population must be allowed to handle their "peculiar situation" in the traditional way. Thus must editors sit on the stationary horse while desiring to ride rapidly into the sunrise of progress and prosperity.

Other states, not so spectacularly heckled by Communists as Alabama, find other dangers to the South's "peculiar situation" equally

hateful. Undisturbed by revolutionary ideas, Negroes and white people would continue in a state of harmonious living in which all persons of each race find contentment. This harmony is clearly set forth by a Georgia editor:

But he (the Negro) is still extant in the majority of cases with the inherent negroid characteristics of the common laborer. . . . He is still something of an economic necessity. . . . The problem of dealing with him evolves into making him a fit citizen. . . . It is only appropriate that they (Negroes) live in their present capacity as neighbor citizens in continual peace and friendship.

This peace and friendship, based on a recognition of and respect for a caste system, is the basis of good race relations. Negroes, undisturbed in the philosophical acceptance of their "present capacity" in a white society, go along unharmed and unlynched. Sometimes Negroes forget their status, even to the point where they think they can defend their property against greedy white neighbors. Then they are liable to sudden death. After a lynching in Mississippi, when an old Negro man had questioned the right of certain acts of white people against him, the local county paper delivered editorially a funeral oration addressed to the remaining Negroes, closing with a benediction:

Negroes must learn—and most of them do know—that they occupy a peculiar place in this land and must keep it. It is hoped that white people will eventually learn better how to handle the minor difficulties for their own salvation and better interest—and thereby save themselves and their loved ones much unnecessary trouble and worry.

Outsiders must see in this editor's mind that lynchings are regrettable, and, what is not so generally recognized, a lot of trouble.

Sometimes even Southern white people forget their caste in this biracial society. When they do, though they are admonished, the outcome may be death to a Negro. A Negro was lynched in North Carolina within these late years. Now, a lynching in North Carolina, because of its rarity, is news. But when one does occur—doubtless through necessity—the same racial attitudes that control in the Deep South are exposed editorially by some papers of that state. Such an exposure is made in this editorial:

If some white people were not prone to be familiar with Negroes and socialize with them, allowing them reasons to suppose their presence among white people is acceptable, there would still live in the heart and soul of the Negro the fear and dread of swift and sure punishment in case of wrong doing.

Their presence, except as an economic necessity, is not desired. They must be endured and handled as capably as long experience in dealing with an inferior race—made so by God himself—has taught the white people. Nations which might inflate the ego of a Negro and delude him into thinking that he is a man even as other men must be dealt with heroically. When a Negro is lynched he is not lynched by the persons who fire the guns, pull the rope, or light the bonfire, but by white people who betray their own race and also the Negro whom they pretend to love:

The white and Negro races of the South (editorializes one paper) get along very well and would get along better if the Negro-loving yankee who loves the Negro at long distance and the visionary and fanatical interrationalist who coddles the Negro, would take themselves out of the picture.

#### Education Changes Defenses

Many leading Southern dailies no longer condone lynchings by holding them as necessary to protect Southern womanhood. Editors to some extent have absorbed a few statistics on the alleged crimes

which arouse sensitive citizens. However, they have not come to the point in their education, either in their minds on facts or in their emotions on chivalry, to do more than drop the knight-errant explanation of lynching. Since big dailies have a circulation outside the South and their editors and publishers attend national conferences and conventions, they must represent the South in the light that will be most productive of goodwill and large investments. So they dare not lay themselves open to ridicule by defending lynching on the grounds of gallantry. They cannot defend lynching as a necessary form of violence to insure white supremacy. All the country holds the philosophy of white supremacy—North, East, West, as well as South—but nationally it is not good sales talk to advertise that white supremacy can be maintained in the South—the last stronghold of pure Anglo-Saxon heritage—only by force, coercion, and lynching.

The Scottsboro Case, made famous by outside interference, has become a trifle boring, not only to Alabama but to the larger part of the South. It has done the South no good in many ways but it has proved an asset in one notable way. It has furnished Southern editors a dignified and self-righteous basis for excusing lynchers with a line of argument that the whole country appreciates—delays in court procedure, the uncertainty of punishment, the loopholes in the law—conditions prevalent everywhere and universally condemned.

So, the Scottsboro Case contributes to the editorial policy of Southern dailies in solving their problem of sitting still while riding rapidly to a place in the sun. One editorial—and their number is legion—is representative of all editorials in defense of lynching on these grounds:

Lynching is chiefly attributable to laxity of court procedure and the abuse of the pardon power in the United States. No such outrages against law and order occur in Great Britain and her dominions because British justice is quick and certain. . . . In that difference is to be found the reason why mob violence is an unknown thing in one of the great English-speaking nations of the world but is lamentably frequent in the other.

Dignified in style, elegant in language, balanced in construction, and international in illustration, it holds arguments advanced by J. Edgar Hoover as causes of crime, and applies them deftly and convincingly to lynching. It is a national condition with a special application to the South's "peculiar situation." It satisfies the lynchers with a good alibi for their acts, even if those acts include burning at the stake, or, as happened twice in Georgia in these last two years, the ghastly exhibition of the mutilated dead bodies before lighting the funeral pyre.

Daily papers of the South are beginning to show editorially a growing sympathy toward Federal interference, a sympathy not shared to any noticeable extent by the county weeklies whose local constituencies grapple with the problem of maintaining white supremacy. If the Federal government intervenes in the activities of lynchers, then the burden of stopping lynchings will no longer rest on the South. If two men or officers of the law kill a Negro, that will not be a lynching; but if three or more men and women kill a Negro, that will be a job for the Federal government. The Negro in either case will be very dead. The South can forget the murder but the nation will share the lynching. The pot and the kettle can't call names—a situation greatly desired by Southern editors and their readers.

### III

#### CAN NEWSPAPERS HARMONIZE THEIR EDITORIAL POLICY ON LYNCHING AND THEIR NEWS STORIES ON LYNCHING?

Speech of Mrs. Jessie Daniel Ames, executive director, Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching, Atlanta, Georgia, at the Southern Newspaper Publishers' Association Convention on May 18, 1936.

Lynchings are climactic of type of a violence which is aroused by playing upon fear and hate in human relations. Emotions which precipitate lynchings are identical with those which plunge nations into war. Without hate and fear it would not be possible to stage a lynching or a war.

The surest method to follow in developing hate and fear to the point of violence, whether in precipitating a lynching or a war, is the use of stories of sex crimes committed by the people who are to be killed on the women of the people who are to do the killing. Men and women alike see in outraged womanhood their own mothers or wives or sisters, and they are moved by an invincible force to mete out punishment to the vandals. Something of Arthurian chivalry stirs men's minds; they wear the colors of their own womanhood into a battle for all womanhood.

As it is in war, when true stories of sex violation are lacking, fictitious accounts of imaginary assaults against innocent women by brutish enemies are published, so it is in lynchings. As wars have their roots in economic conditions, greed and avarice, so also have lynchings. "My country right or wrong" furnishes the motive in wars; preservation of white supremacy, in lynchings. In both, a whole people lose for the benefit of the few.

Editors do condemn lynchings. They condemn even particular lynchings. Their handling of such crimes is dignified and logical. On no other subject have editorials and editors risen to greater heights of eloquence in stronger language. But the very nature of the editorial, its dignity and its balanced phrases, restricts its effect on public opinion and its influence on human conduct.

The editorial writer competes in a losing battle with his news stories. He is lost to the public while that public reads on his front page—in language that fairly bristles with expressions calculated to awaken the ever-present fear and hate in the less-privileged members of the white race—a dramatic and inflammatory account of some violation of the white man's code by a "giant Negro." Front page space is not enough. Lest some might fail to see or read the story, streamer headlines, of an inch or more in height, catch the eye of any careless loiterer. Whatever the editor may say after this is like the silent fall of dew after a terrific hail storm.

#### Mencken Is Quoted

Quite apropos is the statement made by H. L. Mencken last month to the American Publishers Association, as it was reported in *Time*: "The editorial page . . . has been going downhill steadily for 50 years. It enlists good men, and sometimes brilliant men, and they work hard and faithfully. On even the worst paper, the editorial page . . . shows more careful writing than any other page, and not infrequently it shows wider information and sounder judgment. Yet how many read it and heed it? Write a scathing editorial on any subject you fancy. Print it on your editorial page. You will get a few letters, and a few of your local bores will call up—no more. Then take exactly the same editorial and reprint it next day on your first page . . . and with appropriate headlines. If you get less than ten times as many letters, call me up in Baltimore with the charges reversed, and a case of Maryland rye will be at your disposal."

Because some Southern women are greatly concerned about lynching

ing, we are on the alert to discover some effective method of approach to the public which will build a new public opinion toward this crime. It is my opinion that in the beginning not one of us thought of the press in any light other than an ally. We read editorials. When one is printed condemning lynching or recognizing our disinterested efforts in applying an educational program against lynching, we feel greatly strengthened for the time being. We are not as a whole over-critical of the press. I think we—even those of us who do not know Mr. Kipling's writings so well—are inclined to agree with him when he says:

Remember the battle and stand aside  
While Thrones and Powers confess  
That King over all the children of pride  
Is the Press, the Press.

We hasten to express our appreciation for every editor who strengthens our purpose a bit by his unqualified condemnation of lynching. We are grateful for editorial commendation of our courage and nobility in openly working against lynching. Again I repeat: We are grateful. But we are coming to see that editorials are not getting us far along our road. Naturally believing in the power of the press, we are interested in the dynamo which generates the power. Some of us think the front pages and the news columns are the dynamo, and we would like to reach the men who control this power.

#### Will Irwin Cited

Will Irwin says in his book "Propaganda and the News," page 84: "More than twenty years ago I sat with a group of American publishers, talking shop. Conversation turned to the decline of the editorial as a social and political force. 'My front page is my editorial,' said one of the company. 'The headlines are mine,' said another."

You know what these gentlemen of the press mean. Some of us women who are readers only are learning what they mean.

Possibly one of the most pronounced failures on the part of the press to deal fairly in the news columns is illustrated in the story of a prevented lynching in Conroe, Texas, a small town not far from Houston. Streamer headlines and space were given to the story: "Hunt Negro After Child is Attacked," "Child Assailed as She Returned Home After Taking Sister to School," "Hunt Negro After Girl is Attacked," "Hundreds Seek Conroe Negro in Attack," and sub-heads: "Girl of About Fourteen Victim of Attack," "Fugitive is Believed in River Bottoms," "Feeling is Intense as Posse Scours Woods," "Girl Sobs Story."

Whatever the nearby metropolitan papers had to say editorially, if anything, was said so vaguely and so generally that their words have been lost to memory in the vivid recollection of the clamor of the front page headlines and space. In addition, this story represents another and equally potent method of propaganda both in war and in lynching. I refer to the suppression of essential facts which if given equally emphasized publicity might crack the hard shell of hate and fear and let in a ray of reason.

This story dropped out of the papers at the end of the second day. No Negro was captured. No "barbecue" was pulled off. Nobody was arrested or held. The story just disappeared without one word of explanation. One paper carried this paragraph which was a clue to the whole story:

"They (the bloodhounds) weren't getting anywhere—the man didn't seem to be going anywhere. He just kept crossing and re-crossing the river. As a result of this the dogs sort of lost interest in the affair and more dogs were phoned for. Well, the second set of dogs got on the job early in the night. They would pick it up and lose it right away and about 10:30 they checked out."

The bloodhounds each time traced the trail back into the body of the white posse. The quality of the paragraph quoted and the near-byness of the metropolitan press to the town leads one to conclude that either the papers had their own representatives on the field or the re-write man was a knowing fellow with a sense of irony. These papers which carried this story have been for years editorially opposed to lynchings.

We know that men of the press know a very great deal more about people than we do. They know more about the emotions of people than we do. So whatever we learn after several years of study we are safe in concluding that our news is old news to the fourth estate.

#### Place of Different Stories

When a story is lacking in spectacular features which earn it headlines on the front page, it is found tucked away somewhere on an inside page, no more conspicuous in type or heading than is given to editorials. But suppression of facts feature these stories and to such an extent that the press is unwittingly developing another alibi for lynching. We have discovered this fairly recently in current news stories.

Any intelligent Southern newspaper man knows that when a jury of Southern white men gives a Negro one year in prison or one year on the chain-gang for criminal assault or attempted criminal assault upon the person of a white woman or child, there is something which needs to be explained. These short penalties for this revolting crime, given without full publicity as to the facts involved, are proving a doubledistilled poison to Southern life. Men and women, in increasing numbers, point to these short penalties as evidence that the courts of the South are controlled by Communists who believe in social equality and intermarriage. This fear of Communistic control of our courts intensifies racial fear, or the other way about.

That there is propaganda by suppression is illustrated by two such cases of short sentences:

Last fall the papers carried a news story of a Negro who had received one year in prison for attempting to assault a twelve-year-old child, the daughter of a white farmer. This needed study. A prominent woman citizen of the State in which the crime allegedly was committed visited the town. From the white merchants and city officials she learned of the good character of the Negro—his prompt payment of bills, his industry, and his sobriety. She also learned, from the same people, of the questionable character of the white man. After his Negro tenant was sent to prison for one year, the white farmer took all the crops of the Negro, as well as his chickens and hogs, leaving the Negro's wife and children without support. The news story gave the white child's age as twelve. When the Negro was tried, he was tried for attempted assault not on the twelve-year-old daughter but on her eighteen-year-old sister.

This year, the day after a Negro was lynched for alleged criminal assault, another Negro in the same town was given one year on the chain-gang for a similar crime. The lynching of the first Negro was justified by the public on the ground that had he not been lynched he would have received a sentence of only one year. The papers have not yet carried the story of the suppressed facts. What force would have been placed in our hands for removing the halo of chivalry around lynchers and building respect for courts had the papers made public the story of the white woman and white man who supported themselves through selling a young white girl to any man with the price, without regard to race or color!

Diversion of the public mind from the savage revenge of the mob by emphasizing the heinousness of the crime committed by the victim of the mob excuses any excess of torture. Men and women see in the outraged victim of a "black brute" their own mothers or sisters, wives or daughters. Anonymous letters, demanding to know "How would

you feel if that had been your daughter or sister?" have been received too often for us to overlook the effect these news stories have on the minds of men and women.

#### Descriptions in Newspapers

In describing the victim of an assault, newspapers use such words as "young, lovely, innocent, devout in her religious life, loving, affectionate; now broken and ruined, a glorious future of proud womanhood destroyed and blasted." Men are stirred. No one with a drop of "red blood" in his veins will stand back! If they hesitate, there are women and girls milling around, demanding that they show themselves as heroes, and not yellow cowards.

This method of propaganda has been used successfully over a long period of years—that all white women of the South are categorically pure and noble and sacred, and all white men of the South are defenders of this purity, nobility, and sacredness against spoilation by a Negro. I was brought up on this theory. As a woman of mature years, I discovered that there were white women like those in the Scottsboro case and the Marianna, Florida, case. Even later have I become acquainted with the type of white men involved in the lynchings at Newton, Texas, and Marianna, Florida, in 1934, and the recent one at Danielsville, Georgia.

Cannibalism of mobs, revolting souvenir collections carried by lynchers, sadistic acts inspired by diseased and poisoned minds—these facts are played down if they are mentioned at all, while justification is given for any extreme measure of cruelty which a maddened mob may devise. "It was terrible," one white woman remarked about the mob at Marianna, Florida, "but nothing that could have been done to the Negro would have been too much."

In Will Irwin's "Propaganda and the News," almost every statement he makes about propaganda and war, the place of the press in creating hate and arousing fighting blood, can be paralleled with similar stories of propaganda and lynching—ways of turning on racial hate and fear and arousing the savage in white men. It seems to me that the Southern press has helped to cultivate the field of public opinion which is now fertile for seeds of communism and fascism. Lynchings are spectacular incidents of the complete destruction of law and the courts while the mass rules. Hatred, the essential ingredient for murder and lawlessness, is never completely dormant. Methods of propaganda—or technique, as sociologists call it—for stirring up this hatred have become so much a part of our method of control that unconsciously, because of familiar outlines, newspapers which now seek to change this in their editorial columns print news stories of lynchings which satisfy the state of the public mind; suppress details that reveal the white man as something less than chivalrous; divert attention from his acts of savagery; emphasize and support the emotions of hate and fear; and in other subtle ways feed the doctrine of group superiority, as an attribute of birth, to those of our race who have failed to achieve individual superiority over their Negro neighbors.

## IV

### TOWARD LYNCHLESS AMERICA\*

By JESSIE DANIEL AMES

An old Hindu proverb says that "the view depends upon the point of view." The point of view in considering lynching and conditions during recent years is of importance. If one sees lynching as an isolated crime unrelated to social conditions, then that person with this point of view undoubtedly considers punishment of the community in which the crime is committed the surest and, possibly, the one way to stop lynching.

On the other hand, if one sees lynching as a symptom of violent social disease which afflicts not the community alone in which the lynching occurs but a whole section of country, then that person considers that the disease must be cured to destroy the symptom. In other words, to those who believe lynchers are criminal devils, inherently wicked and depraved, then punishment, swift, severe, and sure, appeals; to those who believe lynchers are born into a social and economic system which turns them to acts of brutal violence, then change of the system appeals. Indeed, the view depends upon the point of view!

#### Lynching a Diminishing Crime

If people who lynch are born evil, then there is little point in discussing conditions during recent years. It must be concluded at once that lynchers have died off—they have not been punished for murder—or they have been miraculously regenerated. No one in his right mind will argue seriously that lynch-minded individuals have suddenly resolved overnight to stop lynching. Yet something must be taking place that is changing them. For lynchings have decreased so remarkably—from 3,080 in the decades 1882-1901 to 295 in the decades 1920-1939, and from 231 in 1892, the highest annual record, to 3 in 1939, the lowest—that it is clearly a diminishing crime in the United States. Going back of these figures, however, the observer may conclude that it is also a vanishing crime, for while in 1933 there were twenty-eight lynchings in eleven states, in 1939 there were three lynchings in two states.

Possibly lynchers are beginning to sense the change in public opinion which no longer supports them unreservedly. Maybe they recognize that their acts are not accepted as evidences of chivalry. Then, too, in addition to a changed public opinion which discourages their extra-legal methods, their economic conditions are improving. Neither of these factors operates instantly or separately. They become potent gradually over a long period of time. So, in order to understand conditions affecting lynchings in recent years, it is necessary to go back another decade to 1920.

#### South Takes a Stand

It was in the year 1919-20 that the South decided to do something in earnest about the problems of its biracial society. For ten years slow and apparently ineffective efforts to improve conditions through education were carried on. In that time it seemed as though nothing was evident except talk. To be sure the talking was done as much by Negroes as by white people and, even more important, Negroes were talking to the white people in person. Nor were they careful of the sentiments and emotions of their white brethren. The idea of holding conferences and meetings on an interracial basis gained support among Southern church leaders, men and women, educators and private citizens, until by 1930 thousands of Southern white people had met and talked with Southern Negroes, had sat down together

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and frankly discussed conditions affecting the lives of Southern people.

About this same time, too, the seeds of a new public opinion were beginning to be sown in Southern colleges. Then it was that these institutions began to liberalize their curricula to include sociology, economics, and political science—subjects with current and local applications. The young people reaching college age twenty years ago were an awakening group of future citizens. The war had made them restless and disobedient to the mores of the pre-war period. In addition, they were the third generation removed from the experiences of Reconstruction and their emotions of sectionalism and race prejudice were not so deep that they were blinded intellectually to the conditions of the present. Race relations, introduced with misgivings in a few of the colleges as a dangerous experiment in education, became popular courses which have spread in the last ten years to more than 75 white Southern colleges. The first students introduced to race relations are today men and women in their middle thirties. They and those who have reached maturity in later years hold opinions on conditions in the South's biracial society which are affecting public opinion on lynching and the causes underlying mob violence. The Southern colleges, reaching into more and more homes of the low, middle, and upper middle classes, are inevitably, if occasionally reluctantly, helping to destroy the old mores of the South.

#### Woman Suffrage Affects Attitudes

Far-fetched as the statement may appear, the enfranchisement of women in 1920 has contributed its mite to a new public opinion on lynching. The South did not accept suffrage for women; it acquired it in spite of the fight-to-the-last-ditch stand taken by both the Southern press and Southern politicians. That Southern women should have been slow to exercise the ballot as a weapon in the fight to make the world a better place for children was a natural consequence of the oft-repeated and generally accepted statement that no real lady would degrade herself by participating in politics. But younger women, growing to maturity, educated in the increasing numbers of co-educational schools, did not accept the dictum of the man-made society. They and those others who had fought for political freedom were seeking the proper medium for reaching the mass of women. They, being Southern born and bred, turned naturally to the one organization with which they were familiar—the church. They knew that the church was powerful, and they knew, also, that the strong hold of the church on social conditions could best be broken within the church itself. So in the church, the one recognized sanctuary for women's undisturbed activities, Southern women became active in race relations and law observance in their own land while they continued their work to extend the Kingdom of God to foreign lands.

Whatever else may be said about Southern women, it cannot be said that they lack the moral courage to act according to their convictions even though those convictions may run contrary to social custom. Certainly, investigation of lynchings in person was about the most contrary act they could have committed. But they had to have some understanding of lynchers and they had to have it firsthand. When from their own investigations of lynchings, allegedly committed to protect Southern womanhood, they found that they were used as the shield behind which their own men committed cowardly acts of violence against a helpless people, they took the only action they could. They pledged themselves to educate against lynching in the towns where they lived and to publish by word of mouth the facts about women and lynching. It was at this point that woman suffrage made its contribution to the decrease in lynching and the changing of public opinion. For these women spoke as citizens who had the assurance born of the knowledge that they had the power to affect the political lives of local and county politicians whose bread

and butter depended upon the will and the wishes of their constituents. The politicians also knew it.

#### Church Women Change Situation

The influence of church women on the lynching situation is not a conjecture. It is a fact. In 1931 when they launched their campaign against lynching, some Southern editors expressed scorn—"It will be just as easy to stop lynching by resoluting against it as to prevent war by denouncing it"—or warnings "that they were doing a vain and useless thing." Nine years later, in 1939, not one of the three lynchings committed involved an offense against Southern womanhood—nor were there more than a few small newspapers expressing other than appreciation for the "courageous work" done by the women of the South.

These—interracial meetings, schools, the church and home, the press and Southern women as an organized bloc—are all contributing factors to a changing public opinion in the South toward lynching. To which one is due the most credit depends upon the point of view of the proponents of each. But regardless of credit, lynching is decreasing and disappearing by the initiative and support of Southern white people. Lynchers are no longer held in esteem and they are beginning to feel it.

But the would-be and have-been lynchers are themselves growing less committed to lynching than formerly. For the real conditions which have instigated most lynchings in the past have, themselves, been changing. Poverty, disease, illiteracy, starvation from one generation to the next, until malnutrition could be mistaken as an hereditary disease, have so afflicted the rural white and Negro South that hope of rising out of their desperate conditions was dormant if not dead. "Corn" and white supremacy have been the sole physical and emotional releases in the lives of most of the white rural population; "corn" and subtle aggression, the only physical and emotional releases of the depressed Negroes. Living side by side, under these stimulations, conflict has been inevitable.

#### Lynching and Price of Cotton

Past history of lynchings disclose that in periods of depression, when the price of cotton is down, this conflict is intensified. Lynchings increase. The landlords want all the cotton, or as one Georgia editor expresses it, "Now has come the season when the tenant farmer who has made the best crop will be run off from his crop." Under these circumstances mob violence eases the emotional pressure of disappointment and despair of the poor whites and scares the Negroes off the land. True to form, the first year of depression—1930—showed an increase of lynchings from ten in the year 1929, the lowest record of any previous year, to 21 the next year. Up to 1936, in fact, the barometer of lynchings moved in inverse ratio to the price of cotton. But in 1936, with the price of cotton still low, lynchings dropped to a new record and, since that year, lynchings have continued to decrease, each year setting a new low record.

#### The New Deal and Lynching

What happened that changed the course of lynching history? Nothing but hope, the most potent of forces in human existence, hope of better things in the lives of those who lynch and are lynched—the forgotten members of the American people. And here it is that the Federal Government enters the campaign against lynching, not with a flashing sword of vengeance but with promise of a better day for the rural farm laborers of the South. Work relief from the Federal and State Governments put these people to work and reduced idleness and boredom and, equally as important, gave them a little cash money to spend with white merchants. The much-vaunted American pride did not deter them from accepting charity from tax money.

They were working for the government for money and they did not have to work for just anyone for a pitiful roof and a pellagra-inducing diet. The Farm Security Administration offered them a chance to own something of their own for the price of the labor they had been doing for practically nothing in the past. Their children could go to school like other children. The Federal Government, in its entire agricultural program of work, home ownership, proper diet, and health clinics, entered the field against lynching.

White people still feel their racial supremacy as a sacred and inherent trust, but they are beginning to occupy their minds with the more pressing and important problem of living and earning and spending rather than with that of finding a Negro to lynch to prove their supremacy. Negroes long at the bottom of the pile, are beginning to dig themselves out from under, and standing erect; no longer are they moved by the desire to arouse the equally helpless white man to dangerous acts. The Federal Government has not finished its work in the field of preventing lynchings, but it has made a good beginning, as is indicated by the fact that in 1939 not one of the three lynchings was committed in strictly rural communities.

Public opinion against lynching and the Federal Government in its socio-economic program are beginning to convince the South that Booker Washington was a sage of the greatest wisdom when he warned the South that "You cannot hold another down in the ditch without staying in the ditch with him."

## V

### LADIES AND LYNCHINGS\*

By LEWIS T. NORDYKE

The remarkable story of the campaign against lynching which is being carried forward by forty thousand southern women, backed by two million members of social, civic and religious groups. A Texas journalist reports on the promise of better human relations which distinguishes this quiet but determined movement for "self-reconstruction."

Mob violence, masquerading as the champion of southern womanhood, is petering out below the Mason and Dixon Line. And the weaker sex is largely responsible. Nine years ago a small group of thinking women who had long realized that there was more blood-thirst than knight-errantry in howling mobs, organized the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching. Today, backed by women's social, civic and religious groups that have more than two million members in the southern states, the women are massed in one of the most effective social programs ever attempted in the United States and certainly one of the most vital and constructive movements in the South—that of preventing white men from lynching Negroes for any cause whatsoever.

The word "southern" in the association's name is significant, for the program is a native one, conceived, developed and expanded into a South-wide movement by southern-born women. In a strict sense, the movement is part of the final work of reconstruction, the righting of wrongs growing out of slavery and the Civil War.

The accomplishments of these southern women are not widely known, even in the South. The women have worked quietly—very quietly in comparison with the notoriety of lynching mobs bent on murder. Through personal effort, pressure on state officials and peace officers, and with the help of church, social and other organizations, they have greatly affected the South's whole approach to the problem of race relations.

#### Demolishing the Myth of Mob Chivalry

Statistics tell part of the dramatic story of the patient anti-lynching campaign. In the eight years previous to the founding of the women's association, there were 211 lynchings in the nation. In 1930, the year the association was founded, there were twenty-one lynchings in the South. Records of Tuskegee Institute show that in the first eight years the women were organized there were 105 lynchings, only half as many as in the previous eight years. There were thirteen lynchings in 1931, eight in 1932, twenty-eight in 1933, fourteen in 1934, twenty in 1935, eight in each of 1936 and 1937 and six in 1938, the lowest year on record.

Moreover, the records show that in forty instances sheriffs and police officers, many of them committed in writing to the women's program, prevented lynchings in 1938—saving three white men, forty-nine Negro men and a Negro woman from mobs. In each of these officially recorded cases, the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching was on the job, not up front in a dramatic, headline way, but quietly functioning where action counted.

To outsiders the most surprising thing about the anti-lynching drive is that southern women are responsible for it. The remark of one northerner who heard for the first time of the association's program was, "Why, that is peculiar. Isn't the primary purpose of lynching to protect white women?" To this question thousands of southern women have answered for nearly ten years with an emphatic, "NO."

The first thing the association's organizers set out to do was to

\*Reprinted from Survey Graphic, November, 1939, for Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching, 710 Standard Building, Atlanta, Georgia.

destroy the fiction that men lynch in women's names. Here is the organization's declaration and personal pledge:

"We declare lynching is an indefensible crime, destructive of all principles of government, hateful, and hostile to every ideal of religion and humanity, debasing, and degrading to every person involved. Though lynchings are not confined to any one section of the United States, we are aroused by the record which discloses our heavy responsibility for the presence of this crime in our country. We believe that this record has been achieved because public opinion has accepted too easily the claim of lynchers and mobsters that they were acting solely in the defense of womanhood. In the light of facts, we dare not longer permit this claim to pass unchallenged nor allow those bent upon personal revenge and savagery to commit acts of violence and lawlessness in the name of women. We solemnly pledge ourselves to create a new public opinion in the South, which will not condone, for any reason whatever, acts of mobs or lynchers. We shall teach our children at home, at school and at church a new interpretation of law and religion; we will assist all officials to hold their oath of office; and, finally, we will join with every minister, editor, school teacher and patriotic citizen in a program of education to eradicate lynching and mobs forever from our land."

That pledge is not an idle one. Nearly 40,000 of the leading white women of the South have signed it and have fought for the principles involved, including the statement that men do not lynch in the South to protect the flower of southern womanhood.

When, on November 1, 1930, two dozen southern-born women met in Atlanta, some amazing facts about lynchings were placed on the council table. Guarding against possible consequences of acting in haste on what might be a half-baked idea, the small group had made an exhaustive survey of lynching. Here are some things they learned:

Since 1886, a total of 4297 persons had been lynched in the United States, most of them in the South—but only 21 per cent of the victims had been lynched for crimes against white women.

Women had been present at all lynchings of recent years and in a number of cases had participated. Some of the women were mothers with young children who, on several occasions, were actually balanced precariously on parents' shoulders so as to have a better view. Young boys and girls were contributing their numbers to the mobs, both as spectators and as leaders.

From 1922 to that autumn of 1930, there had been 211 lynchings, 204 of them in the South. But only 29 per cent of the victims had been accused of crimes against white women.

Then came the questions that electrified the conference: What did the other 71 per cent of the victims do to provoke the murderous wrath of mobs? Why do white men lynch Negroes? In a tense moment, the women saw what had been traditionally known as southern chivalry stripped down to sadistic barbarism. In the economic, social and racial significance of the problem lay the real challenge.

Under the leadership of Mrs. Jessie Daniel Ames of Atlanta, today executive director of the association, an even dozen of that pioneer group pledged themselves to do all within their power to prevent lynchings and to change public opinion to abhor instead of countenance mob murder. The women decided they had two jobs. First to carry on an educational program between outbursts of violence; second, to act quickly when a mob formed, or when there was a threat of a mob. The first they considered of greater importance, and they wrote into their minutes:

"The time to prevent lynchings is before the mob forms. Investigations have disclosed that no county in the South is free from the shadow of a possible lynching. Because the county is the important unit of government, intensive activities are planned to be carried out by women in each county seat before a mob ever threatens."

And this the women set out to do. Each of the dozen original members was prominent in church work and each knew that in the South church women are beyond any doubt the dominating force. So to the church organizations the women went for assistance. The response was great. Hundreds of southern women offered their aid. Prominent women like Mrs. Attwood Martin of Louisville, who is well known as a novelist under the name of George Madden Martin, joined actively in the work and placed their influence behind the program.

Then the women started work—talking, writing letters, distributing printed circulars, interviewing officers and state officials, addressing organization meetings—with the ambitious goal of interesting every organization of men and women in every county in the South in the campaign against lynching.

There was ridicule. There were threats. Organizations which had made the terrorizing of Negroes their chief business since the Civil War opposed the women, inspired sinister warnings or sent them under their own official letterheads. In no few communities the women were ordered not to speak. In other communities officials demanded that talks be written and censored locally before the women might speak.

"Many of the women were threatened," Mrs. Ames said. "I know women who wouldn't tell their husbands of the threats because they feared their families would insist that the women quit the work. Women went into communities in which there had been lynchings. Many of the people were surly, belligerent. When we take into consideration the fact that some of the lynchings had grown out of politics and crooked business deals, we can understand that the women were by no means safe at all times. They knew of the constant danger, and they didn't forget to pray."

#### The Momentum of Education

By good chance the women struck at an opportune moment. For years some of the leading newspapers of the South had fought mob murder. Such editors as Grover Hall of the Montgomery *Advertiser*, Mark Ethridge of the Louisville *Courier-Journal*, Virginian Dabney of the Richmond *Times-Dispatch*, and many others had made a strong fight against lynching.

State officials, particularly the governors, in several states had taken a reasonably firm stand against lynching and held sheriffs responsible for lynchings in their counties. In the cities of the South other individuals and organizations, such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, had long been waging anti-lynching campaigns. There was a growing awareness of the social and economic implications of the spirit created by lynching. "Outside" criticism had begun to offend the sensibilities of southern people and make them more self-conscious about charges that lynching was the act of barbarians. In short, public opinion was not unprepared to accept the surprise move made by the southern white women. And, from the start, the women gave thankful credit and offered their full cooperation in all anti-lynching movements, except the drive for a federal anti-lynching bill, which because of the women's program of applying pressure to southern sheriffs, they neither favored nor opposed.

Perhaps the most important part of their work—the part that shocked a large section of the public into a changing view of the lynching problem—was that of gathering and publicizing facts about lynchings. The records in Mrs. Ames' office in Atlanta show that in more than one instance innocent Negroes were lynched on non-existent grounds at the instigation of white men who coveted the crops the Negroes had cultivated.

Here are some of the officially recorded facts the women publicized in newspapers and in printed circulars:

Nine of the 84 mob victims in the 1931-35 period were not accused of any crime and 25 others were accused of minor offenses.

Near Moultrie, Ga., Bo Brinson, an unaccused Negro, was killed at his home by a mob looking for John Henry Sloan, who had killed a white man.

In Baker County, Ga., a Negro killed a white bootlegger at a Negro dance. When the "right man" couldn't be found, two unaccused Negroes were lynched as an object lesson.

In Cheatham County, Tennessee, a Negro was lynched for slapping a white woman who was drinking beer in a Negro store.

At Tuscaloosa, Ala., a helpless Negro paralytic was lynched on the charge of attempted rape.

In Greenville County, S. C., a Negro was shot to death in his home at midnight by a masked mob after he had repeatedly asked for a settlement for his crop.

Revelation of such facts, Mrs. Ames said, aided the Association in battering down opposition and winning popular public approval; and this, of course, represented a decided change in public opinion. As a result, the ranks of the women crusaders increased by thousands.

#### Mrs. Mullino Prevents a Lynching

How do some 40,000 crusading southern women work? On Christmas Day, 1934, Mrs. Ames was preparing for holiday festivities. Her telephone rang. An Associated Press editor informed her that a Negro had killed an officer in Schley County, Georgia, and that a mob was forming. Mrs. Ames rushed to the office. She discovered that the Association had no signatures in Schley County. But in adjoining Macon County lived a member of the Georgia Council of the Association, Mrs. F. M. Mullino of Montezuma. Mrs. Ames telephoned Mrs. Mullino, who stopped preparation of her Christmas dinner and started telephoning everyone she knew in Schley County, urging each to bring pressure on the sheriff to prevent a lynching.

A short time later, Mrs. Mullino was informed that the Negro was in a swamp in her own county. She called the sheriff and his deputies, and a number of ministers and other public-spirited citizens, urging them to aid in preventing mob action. Until mid-afternoon she stayed at her telephone. Finally the Negro was captured—by officers. That Christmas Day was not blackened by a lynching in Georgia. The law took its course. Had Mrs. Mullino gone to the mob and pleaded for restraint she would have been taunted. She knew that. She knew, too, that a sheriff, even though disposed to carelessness in such cases, couldn't afford to take any chances after dozens of influential voters had demanded that every possible precaution be taken to insure a constitutional trial for the accused Negro.

That is only one of dozens of examples of the women's quick work. Early in their campaign they realized that the sheriff was the key man. It was up to him to handle any mob forming in his county. The women approached practically every southern sheriff, asked each to sign a pledge to do all within his power to prevent lynchings. Some of the sheriffs shrugged off the matter as "just another one of them things." But the women did not stop there. They went about their work of obtaining the signatures of influential persons, of talking anti-lynching in schools, churches and at public meetings, of distributing circulars giving facts on lynchings and asking the public to help prevent mob law.

Southern women know local politics. No strange woman from the central state office called on a sheriff in the counties of the fifteen states. Nothing like that. A woman voter living in each sheriff's own county went to him about the lynching matters, and that is about as firm political pressure as can be applied. Each time there was a crime, or an accusation which might lead to a lynching, the women went into swift action. The sheriff started getting calls from in-

fluent voters and visits from prominent men and women who demanded that he protect the Negro, take him to an unnamed jail if necessary. Some of these calls came from governors who had been informed by Association members of possible attempted violence. In some southern states a governor can remove a sheriff who loses a prisoner to a mob. In certain instances southern governors have called out the militia to protect accused Negroes.

#### A Basic Approach to Race Relations

At the end of 1937 the southern women issued a startling statement entitled, "Where Were the Peace Officers?" It declared: "All eight victims of lynchings in 1937 were in the hands of peace officers. In seven of the lynchings, investigations indicate, officers were either in the mob or were in collusion with the mob."

Here is a typical message sent all persons who have committed themselves to the anti-lynching program. "Do you know your sheriff? Have you talked with your sheriff? If it is an election year, have you talked with the candidates for sheriff? Have you asked each candidate what he will do to prevent lynchings if elected? The voters will decide for or against lynchings this year."

The results have been extraordinary. To date 1229 southern peace officers in fifteen states have written their signatures to pledges to educate against lynching and to prevent mob action.

Many sheriffs have volunteered their pledges. In asking the sheriffs to sign pledges the women do not intend to intimate they think the sheriffs would countenance lynchings. All they want is cooperation, and most peace officers are giving it. A recent issue of the Texas Sheriffs Association's monthly magazine bitterly attacked lynching as murder and urged Texas sheriffs—there are 254 of them—firmly to aid in stamping out all such outrages.

The women have not limited their pressure to sheriffs. They have used the same methods on governors, legislators and other state officials. In Kentucky, 2000 women demanded repeal of the "gallows festival" law, which provided public hangings for men convicted on charges of rape. The law was repealed. The law, which made the crime of rape punishable by hanging in the county where the offense was committed, had been intended to quench the lynching spirit by demonstrating publicly that the law had taken its course, but the practice became distorted and was marked by many shockingly shameful celebrations, at which, as one southern newspaper pointed out, morbid appetite grew by what it fed on.

The women's work has included some activities more strenuous than signing petitions and applying pressure. They have faced howling mobs bent on lynching Negroes. Their pleadings were seldom heeded or even heard, but the women did all they could. Another dangerous job has been that of visiting the scenes of lynchings and collecting the real facts.

In cases—particularly those actually involving crimes against white women—in which the Association has stepped into the scene, members have been taunted with:

"What if it were your daughter? What if it were you?"

To these jeering questions the women can reply with facts from the records. In 1936, the seven-year-old daughter of an Alabama woman, who was committed to the program, was attacked by a Negro. The mother, clinging tenaciously to her ideals and principles at a time when it would have been understandable had she succumbed to a profoundly human desire for revenge, prevented mob violence by her appeal that the law take its course.

Two aged sisters, who had only read of the southern women's program, pleaded with a posse of men in a Texas village in 1938 not to attempt to lynch a Negro who had attacked them. The sisters made their plea from beds in which their injuries confined them.

The Association has its central council in Atlanta with Mrs. Attwood Martin as chairman and Mrs. Ames as director. There are thirteen council members at large, and each of the fifteen states has an independent council. The women work without pay and have planned their organization so shrewdly that it has none of the drawbacks common in ordinary guilds. They have carefully avoided strict rules of organization. "Much of the ineffectiveness of reform movements," said Mrs. Ames, "arises from the determination of the leaders to set up an organization into which are gathered only like-minded people, thereby cutting them off from making converts." And they have carefully avoided the mistake of getting too far ahead of public opinion. "Knowing at the start," said Mrs. Martin, "that if we went too fast, moved ahead of public opinion in a particular locality, it would be the Negro population that would suffer, we have refrained from overzeal until sure of our support."

And all along, every day of the year, the quiet educational program in which thousands of women have relayed the Association's message to high schools and colleges, Sunday schools and churches, social, religious and patriotic clubs has been carried forward. Even the drama has been used in this earnest educational campaign. The Association sponsored a one-act play contest, in which the subject was limited to anti-lynching. "Country Sunday" by Walter Spearman, teacher of journalism in the University of North Carolina, and "Lawd, Does Yo' Undahstan'?" by Ann Seymour, teacher in the schools of Palestine, Tex., were the winners. The plays were widely produced by Little Theater groups, and Miss Seymour's play was included in "Representative One-Act American Plays of 1938," which had a circulation of more than 20,000. The women have not been able to estimate the number of persons the message of the plays reached, nor do they have any idea how many thousands their constant flow of printed circulars on lynching and its prevention have affected.

The central office now sends out more than 10,000 pieces of literature upon direct request each year. Requests for information on the work have come from India, China, Africa, England, and the Philippines.

In order to accelerate the work, the Association has requested Mrs. Ames to develop a study book of methods on the education of the public against lynching and its prevention. All the methods the women have found in ten years to be successful—ways of carrying on the educational program when there is no mob to combat, and action necessary when there is danger of a mob—will be included in the handbook. In addition there will be factual discussions of the racial problem in the South. With this book in the hands of thousands of women, each worker will benefit by the Association's past experience in combating lynching. And the goal of the women is 100,000 signatures and pledges of cooperation from every sheriff in the South.

It is the hope, the prayer, the intention of these thousands of southern women that not far in the future they will look at the first page of their morning newspaper and see an item something like this:

Tuskegee Institute, Ala., Dec. 31—(AP)—The Tuskegee Institute reported today that for the first time since the Civil War no lynchings occurred during a year in the United States.

## VI

### THE "WHITE PRIMARY" An Extra-legal Institution

"White primaries" are not created specifically but are under State laws authorizing party primaries.

These laws empower political parties to prescribe other qualifications for voters in party primaries in addition to those prescribed by law for general elections.

State Executive Committees of the Democratic Party of the South have ruled consistently that participation in Democratic Party primaries be limited to qualified "white voters."

This rule is adopted anew each election year by State Democratic Executive Committees prior to the dates set for holding primaries.

#### The Primary and the Supreme Court

Up to May, 1941, the Supreme Court of the United States had held that a primary was a system for the nomination of candidates for office and, not being an election, was not subject to regulation by the Federal Government.

In May, 1941, the Supreme Court of the United States appears to reverse its previous decisions:

... a primary election which involves a necessary step in the choice of candidates for election as representatives in Congress . . . is subject to congressional regulation as to the manner of holding it . . . the right to participate through the primary in the choice of representatives in Congress . . . is the same . . . as the right to vote at the general election.

The "White Primary" is not an issue in the decision of the Supreme Court given in the preceding paragraph, but it may constitute a precedent which could be used in the suit on the "White Primary" which is on its way to the Supreme Court from Texas.

In February, 1941, the Executive Committee of the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching decided to study "the effects of disfranchisement of Negroes on the personality and attitudes of white people."

\* \* \* \*

In November, 1941, the Woman's Division of Christian Service of the Methodist Church approved the recommendation of its Committee on Christian Citizenship in the Division of Christian Social Relations to work to "remove all barriers to the use of the franchise such as . . . the white primary."

ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHERN WOMEN FOR THE  
PREVENTION OF LYNCHING

710 STANDARD BUILDING

ATLANTA, GEORGIA

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## THE "WHITE PRIMARY"

### AN ANACHRONISM IN THE YEAR 1942

December 8, 1941, the United States declared war on Japan. In the same week war was declared on Germany and Italy.

In that week the United States became the ally of all nations and races fighting for the principles of democracy as opposed to the principles of totalitarianism.

The United States became the ally of every nation and every race at war which we call "colored," as well as the ally of the British Empire and the Soviet Government of Russia.

The United States believes the nations of the Western Hemisphere must stand together against a common foe.

The citizens and governments of some of these nations of the Western Hemisphere are "colored."



For the dominant political party in a third of the United States to rule that in 1942 only qualified "white voters" shall be allowed to participate in the selection of the officials of our democratic government would be an anachronism too dangerous to democratic principles and Christian ideals to be preserved for the sake of old days and old ways.